

# **ideas & action**

\$1.50

**for workers' emancipation**

No. 2

Summer, 1982

## **El Salvador: State-Terrorism Made in USA**



**Poland:  
State-Terrorism  
Made in USSR**

## Two Concerns

Dear Folks—

I received a copy of "Revolution for Freedom in El Salvador?" at a May Day rally in Seattle. I was impressed with much of your analysis, but two areas concern me—

(1) You don't say if any of you are from El Salvador, have ever worked there, what kind of contact you have with people there, etc. To prescribe the best course of action for another country based only on second-hand info, even tho' it may be well researched, isn't realistic. I'd be interested in what contact you've had with the workers/peasants/guerillas in El Salvador and what they

think of your ideas.

(2) The lack of feminism, which is distressingly more and more common in anti-authoritarian writings. You say nothing about how the assemblies and congresses you propose will confront and fight sexism within them—and as a woman, I know it will be an issue. You say nothing about how a post-revolutionary society would eliminate rape, homophobia, violence against women, etc. Do you think they automatically vanish with workers power? No, they are a part of patriarchal culture and continue within and after the revolution, which means that the revolution benefits only some men, as its been with other revolutions. They still

"re-educate" gays in China. Failure to include sexism in your analysis is failure of revolution of revolution itself.

Dialogue is a good thing, so hopefully we've each given the other something to think about.

Janine C.  
Seattle, WA

## Reply

Our leaflet had mainly one limited purpose—to show why the FMLN-type revolutionary strategy—based on the building up of guerilla armies, run by political groups, is incapable of contributing to social emancipation. Our alternative was intended to address basically one question—how can the need for an armed struggle against the State—a need that is widely perceived by masses of people in Central America—be conducted in a manner consistent with emancipatory aims? We certainly did not imagine that we could deal with all aspects of libertarian revolution in a leaflet.

Janine's questions are certainly relevant. Our not addressing explicitly the issues of women's emancipation in the leaflet does not mean we are not interested in the topic. On the contrary, we agree it is vital.

In the leaflet we did suggest that the workers' congresses should include delegations representing independent women's organizations. We feel that the struggle for women's emancipation has to be an integral part of the revolutionary process. From the very beginning, and not put off till "after the revolution." This is implied by our view that what you get after the revolution is shaped "by the way the struggle against the existing, oppressive order is organized."

Because we think the oppression of women exists as a systematic facet of the capitalist system, and is not reducible to just "a trick used by the bosses to divide workers," there will also be a need for an autonomous women's movement. "Autonomous" in the sense of having its own organizations (not just "transmission belts" of leftist parties, e.g.),

(turn to inside back cover)

## Still Taking Pot Shots?

Dear Ideas & Action Folks,

Tony passed on a recent issue of your journal. Great layout and graphics. Liked most of the copy too; although I don't understand why you find it necessary to continue to get in your digs at ACF and the IWW. There are serious problems with both organizations; but I would assume we will come down on the same side of most struggles with you. It seems to me your copy could be put to better use concentrating on our common enemies—statism, capitalism, etc. But then, it's your journal.

## Reply

We think that discussing what went wrong with the ACF and the IWW is important. How can the movement overcome its mistakes if we don't discuss them?

An open debate and discussion of ideas about present-day social reality and building movements for social change in a libertarian direction is healthy; in fact, this kind of discussion is important for raising the understanding of the movement as a whole. Even if you ultimately aren't convinced, having to defend your ideas forces you to strengthen your arguments and build a better case for your point of view. One of the reasons we (i.e. the political tendency this magazine is

I'll be interested in following your further progress. Please put me on your mailing list. I'm enclosing a check for \$5 to help defray some of your expenses. Also enclosing a copy of the first issue of an occasional paper being put out by people from Nameless and Creative Urge [Ann Arbor area ACF groups]. We may be using some of your graphics in future issues. Hope you won't sue us for copyright infringement.

Solidarity,  
Fred C.

associated with) left the ACF is because it discouraged this kind of controversy and open-ended discussion.



# FOR OPENERS

## Who are the real terrorists?

What image does the word "terrorist" bring to mind? Maybe a small gang, faces enveloped in ski masks, stalking a politician or high-powered financier? That's the sort of association projected in the commercial media.

But if we take the term "terrorist" literally, then—in considering who it applies to, we have to ask who is in the best position to create fear and terror in people's lives. The fact of the matter is this: The ruling class in each country has at its disposal the best possible instrument for terrorizing people—the armed thugs in uniform, "the forces of order." From Cape-town to Gdansk, from San Salvador to Istanbul, the uniforms of the enforcers of Law and Order strike the greatest fear in the hearts of the populace.

Poland and El Salvador are two countries that have experienced State-Terrorism on a large scale—as an entrenched elite uses its last line of defense against dissident movements which have, each in its own way, struck a certain responsive chord in large numbers of people in their respective countries.

The analysis of these two social conflicts is the main theme of this issue of *ideas & action*.

The article "Preoccupying Concessions (and Shutdowns)" discusses the current wave of employer-demanded concessions in industry after industry,

the ineffectiveness of the existing unions in this situation, and offers a plant occupation movement as a possible working class counter-attack. Mike Harris' article begins a discussion of the role and politics of libertarian activists in the labor movement. He takes up such questions as "What sort of activist role is non-vanguardist?", "What is the role of organized militant or libertarian minorities in the workplace struggle?", "Should libertarians ever run for steward or other union offices?", "Is there some value in workers organizing into the existing unions?" While the editors do not agree with Mike's article in all respects, we do agree on the basic anarcho-syndicalist parameters—the need for shopfloor-based autonomous worker groups, and the ideal of a labor movement conducted through organizations run directly by the rank-and-file, free of top-down control or manipulation, and independent of collaboration with the employing class and their State.

Just as we plan on producing future articles reflecting our own views on unionism, we'd also like to urge others to join the discussion.

## ideas & action

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## Bill of Lading



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# Preoccupying Concessions (and Shutdowns)

By Dennis Hayes

"We were sold out.... We just got screwed."

Autoworker's response to re-opened contract proposal, 1982

**S**hutdowns. Givebacks. Phase-outs. Concessions. Industrial Ghost Towns. The North American economy is hemorrhaging. A bumper crop of business failure and wage-cutting devastates communities on a major scale. Millions of people—some accustomed to consuming a distracting abundance in U.S.A., Inc.—have been locked out of workplaces. They collect out-of-town job ads, foreclosure notices (for which a new record was set in March), or unemployment checks (if they're lucky) instead of paychecks.

The mass dailies and finance sheets draw parallels to the plant shutdowns and corporate-imposed misery of the 1930s. That decade brought a relatively unregulated capitalism to its knees and millions of people to ruin. But the economic changes implemented in response to the Great Depression make parallels between that era and today misleading.

Today, a unique economic disaster unfolds.

A paralyzing uncertainty stalks the rulers of a State that can no longer spend its way out of economic depression—unlike in the 30s—without courting global monetary convulsion. The uncertainty casts its shadow over vacillating stock, money and commodity markets. And it

suddenly and tragically touches the lives of working people and their families through boardroom decisions to padlock plant gates or to impose more-work-for-less-pay rules.

North American labor unions have also been making history—the kind the Du Ponts, Fords, and Kennedys like to read. The steel, auto, rubber, glass, rail, trucking, lumber and construction industries (to name a few) litter the streets with highly-skilled and demoralized people—most of them union members. The unions respond by disowning them. Nearly half-a-million Teamster and

UAW members alone have been pink-slipped in recent months, without much union-organized opposition. In fact, the unions have successfully defused a seething but as yet unorganized rank and file militancy.

Those workers still employed—with and without union cards—are subjected to one indignity after another by a despotic management desperately retrenching for the no-growth 80s. They cling precariously to alienating or boring jobs. And they watch job conditions in "union shops" become less and less distinguishable from those in "non-union" shops.

## What's the antidote?

Reluctant to freshly examine the unique dilemma posed by 1980s shutdowns and concessions, most of the North American left pursues a number of tired remedies. The prescriptions (which often hide unspoken leftist political ambitions) range from 1) electing new, left-leaning union leaders to 2) campaigning for a "labor party" that would nationalize private industry to 3)



...REBUILD IT IN KOREA,  
REBUILD IT IN  
SOUTH AMERICA,  
REBUILD IT IN...

**huch**



converting isolated plants into co-operatives—oases of worker self-exploitation that could somehow compete with global capital—to 4) toothless “plant closure” laws that will not stop plant closings but only require advance notice.

These strategies share two things in common: misconceptions about the nature of the problem and appeals to undertake actions that would, however bold and militant, actually support the concentration of social power in the hands of a minority of political leaders and bosses, instead of in mass, self-governing bodies created by the workers themselves.

#### What's the problem?

The relevant facts of the matter are these: plants and union locals are being mothballed because recession and growing international competition have forced management to take drastic action. It was not always so with U.S. capital.

The massive human and physical destruction of World War II had left to the captains of U.S. industry a position of almost unchallenged dominance. It infested and preyed upon world resources and markets during the 50s like no previous imperial power; U.S. guns silenced blows against the empire—for the time being.

Giant U.S. industries—with no effective competition—could afford sweetheart deals with unions. Union contracts of the 50s and 60s effectively ensured an undisturbed flow of profits at specified rates of exploitation. They proclaimed pay and benefit hikes for the ranks in exchange for a breakneck production pace, a free corporate hand to automate and “labor peace.”

Mandatory dues checkoff and the monopolistic “union” shop consolidated the top-down union fiefdoms—mafia-like in so many cases, based on the time-honored tradition of cutting deals with,

living like and emulating the manipulative corporate technique of the bosses. Rank and file discontent was fragmentary, bought off or physically silenced.

Ivy tower liberals wrote about the end of the class struggle and ideology and the coming of a new technological era in which leisure time would become the main social problem. But underneath the smug, hypocritical complacency of the American Century, innovative U.S. technology and unprecedented social resources were being squandered: on refined imperial weaponry; on ill-considered suburban sprawl, and on sophisticated distraction cultivated by mass propaganda of the commodity. In the industrial heartland, steel, auto, textile and other plants were allowed to deteriorate, milked by U.S. conglomerates without serious technological competition. All of this generated tremendous long-term social costs that one day would have to be paid for.

*The following leaflet was distributed at an anti-Reagan rally in New York in March.*

## Reaganism isn't the problem— Capitalism is!

Clearly the policies of the Reagan administration are meant to hurt working people, to impose austerity on us for the sake of the continued functioning of the economic system. It is also clear that as workers, students and unemployed we must fight to maintain and improve our material conditions of life, whether it is “good for the economy” or not.

Where does the current economic problem come from? The problem does not come from bad leaders and bad policies, as some would tell you. They would claim that the right leaders with the right program would turn the current wave of cut-backs, lay-offs, and inflation around and run the economy for the benefit of everyone, not just the rich and powerful. Sounds good at first, and it might just work for awhile.

But there's something they either don't know or aren't saying. You see, ultimately it doesn't matter if it's Reagan, Carter, Kennedy or whoever. The system of profit and accumulation called capitalism is so full of contradictions and internal flaws that it inevitably falls into crisis after

crisis. At best, it can alternate between inflation and recession. Worse for us, we can wind up with both, as we have today.

This is so fundamental to the system that no politician can change it. Nor can they, in the long run, convert defense spending into spending for human needs, not as long as the system of international conflict called imperialism exists. A president or Congress may reduce war spending for a time, but as long as there are governments they will compete for world power, and they will require arms and soldiers to do so.

So if capitalism, and not Reaganism, is the problem, what then is the solution? Certainly not the bureaucratic monstrosity of a system, mistakenly called “socialism,” which exists in Eastern Europe, China, Cuba, etc. If Poland proves anything, it is that bosses are still bosses, whether they call themselves capitalist or Communist.

While as working people we need to get rid of private ownership and profit in industry, the last thing we need is to hand it over to the government to run for us. We should instead

seek to manage and run the means of production and distribution democratically and collectively, without private ownership or State managers.

We, the members of the Libertarian Workers Group, are workers and students from all over the New York metropolitan area. We are anarchists because we have learned from our experiences in all sorts of struggles that working people must shake off all the self-proclaimed “leaders” who try to direct our struggles and instead run them ourselves. To do this we need new types of organization—councils, assemblies, free unions—organizations that can serve as a model of a new society without bosses or bureaucrats, without exploitation and domination. Without that kind of movement we will be doomed to fighting one Reagan after another, without ever having gotten to the heart of the problem—the capitalist system all over the world.

**Libertarian Workers Group**  
P.O. Box 692  
Old Chelsea Station  
New York, N.Y. 10113

The post-World War II status quo began to change in the 1970s as a result of two developments: 1) The cost of maintaining a growing imperial military machine, particularly its prolonged deployment in Southeast Asia. This spawned an inflationary debasement of the dollar and rising lending rates that have progressively discouraged long-term U.S. capital investment in new technology. 2) Enter the competition from Japan, Germany and other born-again World War II victims that retooled with more cost-effective technology. Since the 70s, competition has been forcing inefficient U.S. corporations out of markets in a host of industries.

The industrial shakedown goes on. Stodgy U.S. capital, including such former blue chips as Chrysler and International Harvester, is losing its grip. And rather than upgrade technologically in the U.S., companies meet the competition by setting up shop in fascist states—"runaway" shops that lower operating costs and raise profits by literally working people to death.

Today's shutdowns and concessions reflect the technological gap between the U.S. and other countries—and a desperate economic dilemma for capital and labor. Those U.S. corporations that can afford to retool must do so by closing plants, cutting pay, slashing benefits, downgrading job skill, revising work rules—in short, by undermining the basis for sweetheart dealing with the unions—all in order to help finance future unemployment in the form of automation. (GM expects to have 20,000 robots doing the

work of untold thousands of workers by the close of the decade.)

Automation for capital is not an option; it is a matter of survival in the jungle of fat, fatter and fattest profit. This means that concessions extracted from workers by bosses and union leaders—supposedly to avoid shutdowns and layoffs—will at best keep ailing corporations afloat a few months longer (e.g. Chrysler) or finance tomorrow's robots (e.g. GM). The long- and short-term payoff for workers is the same: pink slips.

Unhappily for U.S. capital, concessions and shutdowns don't solve the problem. Gouged paychecks and soaring unemployment contract economic demand for the commodities the companies sell. This precipitates more bankruptcies and layoffs and perpetuates a vicious cycle of human misery. And unlike the 30s, there is very little room here for reform; the state may slow down one symptom (say, double-digit inflation) but only by worsening other symptoms (e.g. double-digit unemployment, which in spring 1982 reached its highest official mark in over 40 years.)

#### What's left?

All of this reflects poorly on leftist strategies to stop concessions and shutdowns by nationalizing private industry—whether "lemons" like Chrysler or "pacesetters" like IBM—solves nothing for workers. Nationalized capital must survive by the same rules and in the same world as private capital. Labor would still face a faceless management compelled to impose layoffs and austerity

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to compete on vicious capitalist terrain. (Ask unemployed PATCO members if the state makes a better boss.)

*Nationalization reflects the failure of private capital and a strategic retrenchment by the state on behalf of collective private capital.* It is no long-term or "historic" gain for workers—no matter how many times it is proclaimed as such by Leninists or social-democrats who programmatically aspire to control nationalized property.

The economic problems posed by shutdowns and concessions are socially too important to leave to union and party bureaucrats—people whose careers depend on maintaining union and political organizations that are no longer instruments of workers' power, but caricatures of their passivity and impotence.

Populist, social-democratic and Bolshevik political parties historically have tended to organize workers as a subordinate and usually passive constituency—a base for highly centralized, top-down machines that seek state power through electoral or other means. And that's the rub. Political parties, no matter how "programmatically" socialist, look to solutions that rely on a state for their implementation. This has been the strategic conception for radical political parties



since the 1789 French Revolution. It demands that parties, not the workers' democratically administered mass organizations, control the insurgent social movement. This ideology of partyist hegemony has contributed time and again to the defeat of revolutionary movements—movements that have boosted into state power a new ruling minority instead of consolidating the autonomous social authority of the mass movement itself.

Workers collectively have never been able to directly control either parties or states. Historically, they remain hierarchical institutions ill-suited to mass democratic control from below. They are tailor-made for domination by a minority; and as such, living relics of class-dominated societies, not vehicles for genuine human liberation.

Nor is the real question whether or not workers should "give up" on the unions; the union machines have given up on the workers. Nationwide, the unions rush to re-open old and settle new contracts more to the liking of recession-bound capital. Contracts that grant virtually open-ended management control over the labor process. Contracts that express the union's willingness to deliver docile and expendable machine-tenders. Contracts that surrender workers' wages, cost-of-living, holiday and other benefits to help pay for job-displacing automation.

If matters are left to the existing unions, business can close plant after plant; expressions of worker militancy will be quarantined and set up for defeat (e.g. the PATCO strike), "renegade" locals put into receivership and/or jail (e.g. the NASSCO Ironworkers), and combative rank and file workers in general stifled and demoralized.

#### Tipping the Iceberg

The leftist demand for new, "class-struggle" union leaders reflects a superficial analysis of the unions. Inevitably current leaders must go. Good riddance. But to suppose that replacements would or could transform the unions into self-managed rank-and-file workplace organizations is utopian. Genuine democracy has never been decreed—implemented from the top down; it must be seized by and from the base.

The unions' despairing and defeatist response to concession-demands and shutdowns isn't really the product of union leaders' ill-will toward the ranks; Douglas Fraser and Lane Kirkland don't like to see unemployed duespayers. The response of the unions to the present situation reflects the traditions by which the unions grew and still survive as *social institutions*. Those traditions are embodied



## 'Somehow, it doesn't make me feel better!'

in the union's institutional experience and perspective.

The labor bureaucracy survives materially by collecting a commission from the sale of labor power to capital and by enforcing the terms of that sale. This means that the UAW, USW and Teamsters unions are not constituted as fighting organizations of workers, but as law-abiding managerial propaganda agencies of conciliation between two economically antagonistic forces—capital and labor. With a virtual monopoly on every economic resource except labor, capital has, needless to say, the advantage in this situation. Without capital, and the countless relations of social inequality capital generates and sustains—and without collective capital's guardian, the state—the presently-existing type of union couldn't exist. The "bread and butter" union's bread is buttered by maintaining a servile relationship between workers and management—no matter what the cost to workers and ultimately to the unions

themselves. Such is the dynamic social instability of unionized labor today.

Obviously, there is more to the dilemma of concessions and shutdowns than is reflected in the leftist and union programs that ostensibly address these issues. Boarded-up factories and layoffs inflict cruel and immediate hardship upon individuals; they also raise profound social questions about the content and organization of production and consumption.

Is it socially desirable for working people to produce more fossil-fuel dependent cars—or, for that matter, napalm, plutonium or twinkies? These are questions that can never be meaningfully debated or democratically decided in boardrooms or lobby chambers by a select few. Genuinely human answers to these questions await the revolutionary seizure and liberation of technology and the labor process by workers themselves.

But how?

### Where to begin?

Historically, the most effective means of fighting austerity and class despotism has been the rediscovery of the workers' social power through direct action at their workplaces. It remains so today. For it is the workers' collective economic role as *producers of capital* that bequeathes to them an independent, if latent, social power.

One of the most effective and creative expressions of workers' power is the workplace occupation. It poses both immediate and long-term advantages. Against shutdown or layoff threats, for example, workplace occupations (unlike conventional strikes) define a strategic basis of struggle. There can be no scabbing in an effectively occupied plant. Betrayal by union leaders is also less likely as occupying workers typically generate their own direct, democratic ways and means of conducting the struggle. And it

is more difficult for capital and the state to set up occupying workers for repression than those on isolated, locked-out picket lines.

Workers facing the economic blackmail of indefinite economic insecurity have relatively little to lose by occupying capital. Although the plant occupation tactic hasn't been used much in the U.S. since the sit-downs of the '30s, the tactic is more common in Europe, especially in response to a proposed shutdown. For example, at the height of the 1975/76 recession in France, 200 workplaces were occupied—and in a number of cases, the workers continued production—without the bosses. According to an extensive study of European plant occupations, by a University of Wisconsin-Parkside professor, over 75% were successful in either keeping the plant in operation or at least, in achieving a much larger severance settlement for the workers. The lesson:

### "Militancy pays."

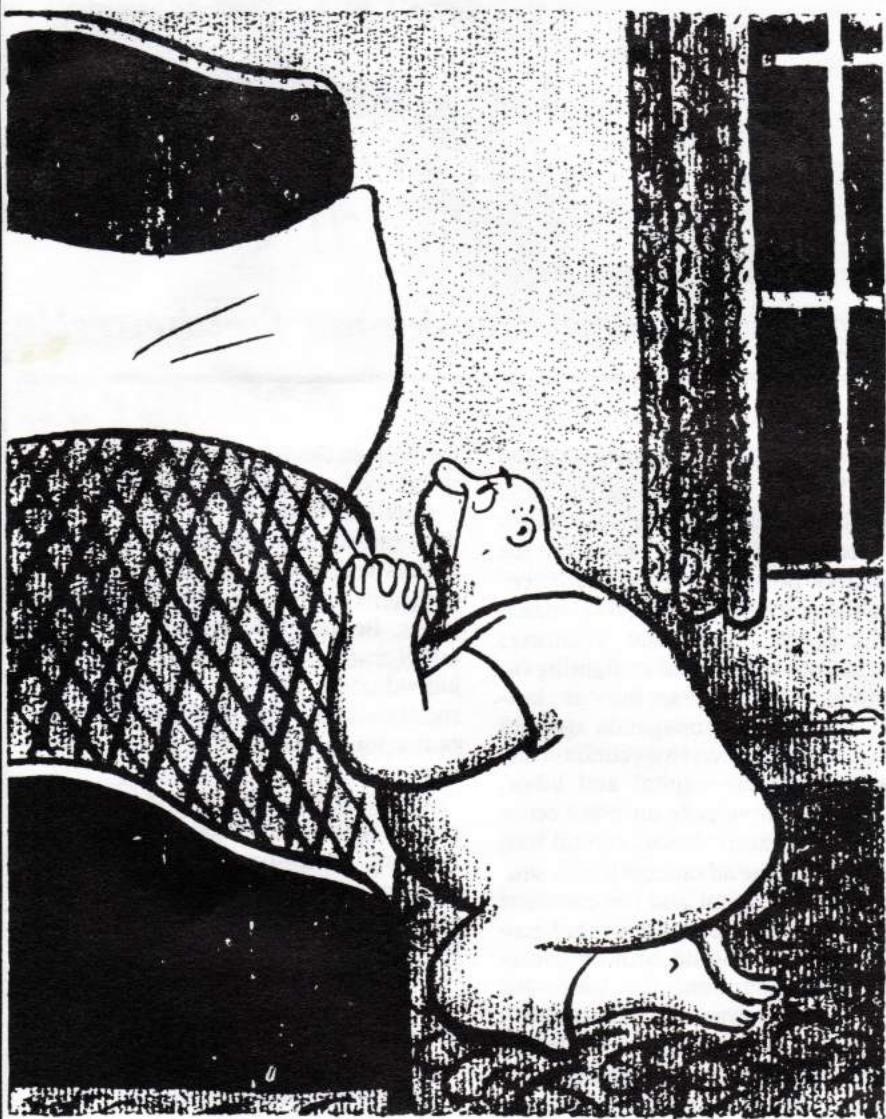
And at the very least, the workers will have gained invaluable (because personal) class experience; they will have tasted the self-confidence and solidarity that emerges when workers collectively exercise their social power for a just cause; and they will have set a creative example for others—an alternative to the white flag being flown by the unions today.

Finally, occupations could give rise to new forms of organization—new autonomous workplace organizations ("self-managed unions," "assemblies," "strike committees," etc), that embrace a more conscious understanding of capital, the state, and the inadequacies of business unionism. Why? Because workers who have directly experienced their power will be less likely to delegate it away to new leaders—particularly if the workers' experience has involved a revealing struggle against the efforts to defeat them by capital, by the state and by the unions.

An occupation movement could generalize industrially or regionally, opening the eyes of hundreds of thousands to direct action and mass workers' democracy. And this would be worth considerably more to down-and-out workers than a subscription for the Houston Post "Help Wanted" ads. It would be an insurgent social movement.

Revolutions are wide-reaching social movements. Revolutionary moments occur when people perceive no other immediate alternative in their lives but to take direct, collective action to protect their survival and fight for a better life; in the process they stumble upon a momentous discovery: their social power. Revolutions consist of ideas that creatively galvanized people into an irresistible social force.

Our's could begin in any way, anywhere: on the lines in Detroit, in the rubble of the South Bronx, in the concrete cages of Cabrini-Green, in the garment camps of Chinatown. Here and there, sparks already fly in the face of capital. Sooner or later the isolated resistance of groups of people in North America will express itself in an erupting of directed class rage. Revolutionary moments will then beat loudly in the hearts of those engaged in workplace struggles, where battles for social power ultimately will be decided. □



**"And please don't let them sit down in my factory"**



## Want to destroy a dangerous and inhumane social order?

Well, dynamite won't do the trick. The development of ideas and movements from the grassroots, based on the active participation and consciousness of millions of people—that's what is needed for self-emancipation. Discussion of the social reality we face, and the development of libertarian perspectives on the struggles of working people and ideas for social change in the direction of self-management, are a necessary contribution to this process. That's the rationale for **ideas & action**.

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# Revolution Self-Limited

**Editors' Note:** The following is an expanded and revised version of a talk that was given by Tom Wetzel, at a forum "Socialist Perspectives on Poland," sponsored by the Bay Area Solidarity Support Campaign, May 22.

The following remarks were made by Zbigniew Bujak, a leading activist of the Warsaw regional organization of Solidarity, after the military crackdown:

"Many people compared the construction of Solidarity to a revolution. But this revolution precluded the use of force and kept the arrangement determining the Polish *raison d'état*—alliances [with the Soviet Union], co-operation [with the State], and the leading role of the Polish United Workers Party [the Polish Communist party]. It was supposed to allow the party and Government authorities to reform the system of rule in the country



and find a new formula for the leading role of the party, taking into account the social changes occurring. It is known, now, that nobody was thinking about such changes and reforms and that our hopes—that we would find even a token of good will on the other side—were illusory. It's clear the current situation could not have been avoided."

If the showdown last December between Solidarity and the state-centralist oligarchy that rules Poland was unavoidable—as Bujak's remarks suggest—the reason for this lies in the fact that the ruling oligarchy could not provide a basis for a solution to the social and economic problems of Poland. Nor would they willingly consent to the working people of Poland constructing their own solutions, through their own self-activated and self-directed mass movement, since this would threaten the oligarchy's continued rule.

During Solidarity's year and a half of open existence, national income in Poland dropped by as much as 25%. Social production plummeted 15% (compared to a 9% drop in national product in the U.S. during the Great Depression of the 1930s).

Solidarity did not cause this economic crisis, but Solidarity did pose an obstacle to the Bolshevik bureaucracy solving the crisis on their own terms, i.e. through the imposition of brutal austerity on the Polish working class.

problems.

"Bureaucratic" is a label that is often used to describe the Soviet-type social formation of the Eastern-bloc countries, but this doesn't tell us what is distinctive about it. After all, capitalism, with the emergence and dominant role of today's mega-corporations, has also become "bureaucratic"—as anyone who has worked for a large company is aware.

The distinctive thing about the Soviet-type set-up is that it is a techno-bureaucratic *centralism*. The ruling class

operates the whole system of social production as a formally unified hierarchy. Under capitalism, on the other hand, only some aspects of social existence are conducted through the State—the institution of *collective* ruling class interests. Capitalism is much more decentralized, with formally independent businesses competing in the marketplace. This decentralized market set-up gives rise to the characteristic recession/recovery cycle of the capitalist economy. The absence of cycles of this sort in the Soviet-type set-up attests to its centralized character.

Is the Polish society a system of class rule, of exploitation? How do we tell? A basic criterion of class exploitation is control over society's "surplus product"—the portion of the total work effort of the society that doesn't just go into consumption but is used to develop society's productive capacity, building new tools, developing knowledge, and furthering the development of the particular civilization along the directions determined by its particular structure.

But even the imposition of martial law has not enabled the rulers of Poland to solve the crisis. Faced with a sullen and uncooperative workforce, the Polish bosses, more discredited and isolated than ever, are confronted with a worsening economic situation:

"Industrial production, declining for months, is now in a virtual free fall, sinking by 10.7% from March to April alone. Capital investment projects worth \$2 billion have been scrapped by the military authorities, and the manufacturing sector is working at about 60% of capacity. Factory shutdowns have thrown 300,000 Poles out of work, and fourfold price increases have slashed real incomes by 20%. 'We are in a desperate situation,' exclaims one Polish economist." (*Business Week*, 6/7/82)

The hierarchical, class-stratified social set-up in Poland and its particular dynamics are the root cause of the economic

The State represents what a ruling class has in common. Since they have virtually *everything* in common under state-centralism, the institutional expression of this is the fact that the state controls virtually everything.

The Polish state is the institutional means of appropriating the social surplus—the bureaucrats at the top of the State pyramid control investment in means of production, education, communication, “means of terror” (cops, army, etc). This is what tells us they are a ruling, exploiting class.

The CP is not itself identical with this ruling class. Many CP members are proletarians. Their membership in the PUWP may net them some minor privileges, and it may express a hope for ad-

vancement up the social ladder. But it does not mean they share in ruling class power. Their powerlessness is also reflected in the rigidly top-down, internally totalitarian character of the CP.

The CP exists to marshal support for the ruling class, to propagate Marxism-Leninism—as the mystifying ideology that tries to justify and mask class rule (the social role that liberalism plays in bourgeois society), and as a vehicle for recruiting new talent for the hierarchy.

The existence of class oppression in Poland was clear enough to Polish working people from their daily experience, and the origins of the social crisis in Poland in bureaucratic rule were clearly described, for example, in *Directions for Action*, a document circulated

to the Interfactory Union Committees (continuation of the Interfactory Strike Committees that arose during the mass strike of August 1980) for discussion prior to the Solidarity congress last October:

“Together we must overcome the economic crisis which threatens us with catastrophe. But we will not be able to do so without unmasking and eliminating its political and social causes. The basis of the crisis lies in the disappearance of democratic institutions and in the consequent deep division between society and the authorities in the...system of public life. . . . The dominant characteristic of this system is the absence of democratic mechanisms for decision-making, the ab-

*The following leaflet was distributed in the New York area after the military crackdown in Poland last December.*

## Poland: No Business as Usual

For all the actors in the tragedy in Poland, there can be no more of business as usual. First and foremost this is true for the Polish workers, for while military rule means an end to one stage of the struggle, they have now entered a new one. One thing that they will need to remember in this new stage is that no struggle, no matter how militant or radical, can ultimately succeed within the boundaries of one nation. Many of those present at the 1981 Solidarity congress recognized this when they called for setting up parallel movements throughout Eastern Europe. Even in these dark days this goal cannot be forgotten.

For Russian imperialism and its Polish lieutenants, the re-emergence of class struggle in Eastern Europe means, for now, as in 1953 in East Germany, in Hungary in 1956, and in Poland in '56, '70 and '76, that they cannot count on a passive or pliant working class in their bureaucratic plans. The continued resistance of militant Polish workers should show them that while they may gain the upper hand for a while, they can neither co-opt the working class or crush its aspirations by brute force.

Let us hope that a point has been brought home to the people of the underdeveloped nations as well. Let them remember that Poland has shown the Russian slogan of “proletarian internationalism” to mean repression and martial law. Let them

understand that so long as there are two imperialist superpowers, a nation that tries to liberate itself alone will either wind up being crushed outright or drawn into the clutches of the other. The movement against domination and oppression must embrace workers in all nations, both East and West, to reach the ultimate victory.

On the other side of the “Iron Curtain,” the “humanitarian” concern of Ronald Reagan and politicians of all stripes is belied by the praises that their employers in the Western banks have put out for martial law. For them the Polish debt is of far more importance than the lives of the Polish people. It should be clear to the people of the Western “democracies” that the real principle at work in these countries is not rule by the people, but rule by Capital.

For us, as workers in America, there are many lessons to be learned from the Polish experience. Firstly, that unity and solidarity at the workplace is the first step towards workers’ power. Secondly, that autonomous organization, outside the ranks of the established trade unions, is needed to carry the struggle forward. Thirdly, the struggle in workplaces and communities must be broadened and generalized. The economic aspect of class struggle needs to take on a political aspect as well. The fight against an individual employer or landlord must,

sooner or later, lead to a struggle against all forms of power and domination in society as a whole.

For now we can offer whatever aid and support we can to the working people of Poland. More importantly, however, we need to examine carefully what has happened there, and to translate it into our own experience. In studying the Polish movement we need to avoid the trap of viewing Solidarity as a monolithic movement, either good or bad. Solidarity is the organized expression of the Polish workers’ movement, and as such contains within it all the currents of that movement, both conservative and radical. While we should particularly support that part of the movement that wants to carry the struggle forward, instead of tying it to the Church or the Polish state, we certainly must support Solidarity and the movement as a whole against repression by Jaruzelski and Brezhnev.

In the meantime, in Gdansk, Warsaw, and Katowice—and in the end, in New York, Chicago and San Francisco, there can be no more of business as usual.

**Libertarian Workers Group  
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sence of responsibility for decisions, and the absence of personnel rotation at the top levels. Decisions regarding the whole society are being taken by the party and administrative organs which themselves are excluded from control by society. . . . The bureaucratic system of government of the nation and economy forms a separate class of rulers exempt from the control of the ruled. . . . This has an important implication: economic reform in Poland cannot succeed in economic and social effects if it is not accompanied by a profound reform of the system of government, which would eliminate the causes of crisis originating in the socio-political system and guarantee that there be no return to the old system."

#### The Crisis of Bureaucratic Centralism

Within Soviet-style state-centralism, the allocation of labor and inanimate inputs of production is organized by central administrative fiat. The use of society's resources is not "disciplined" by the market—except to the extent that market pressure is exerted from outside the system by its trade and credit relations with the world capitalist market. Nor does there exist direct control over the use of worktime and social resources by the masses of the people, i.e. the determination of the content of productive activity by the collective decision-making of mass democracy.

The upshot of this is bureaucratic mismanagement and waste, because managers of production facilities have no in-

centive to be efficient—i.e. to get the most output from the fewest inputs. If anything, they'll tend to engage in the inefficient practice of hoarding, to make sure they make their quotas.

No one at the local enterprise level has a real incentive to be efficient. Over the long-run this ultimately produces stagnation and declining social production.

The statist overlords of the Eastern bloc countries have responded to this crisis in two ways. For one thing, they have gone into debt to keep their economies afloat. The Eastern European regimes are now in hock to Western banks and governments for \$80 billion.

Another Eastern bloc response—especially in Hungary and Yugoslavia—has been the introduction of limited market mechanisms, to "discipline" the workforce and provide more control to the local techno-managerial staff. Elements of the Polish CP have been pushing for this "market" solution for some time. Though Solidarity did not originate this reform proposal, they did advocate their own version of self-management within a limited market arrangement. (More about this later.)

**U**ltimately, the cause of the social and economic crisis in Poland was the fact that the workers were as divorced from control over social and industrial affairs as they are under capitalism. The working people of Poland could only ensure that their time and social resources were used ef-

fectively, producing for their own collective benefit, if they directly managed production themselves. And Solidarity's trajectory pointed in the direction of that solution.

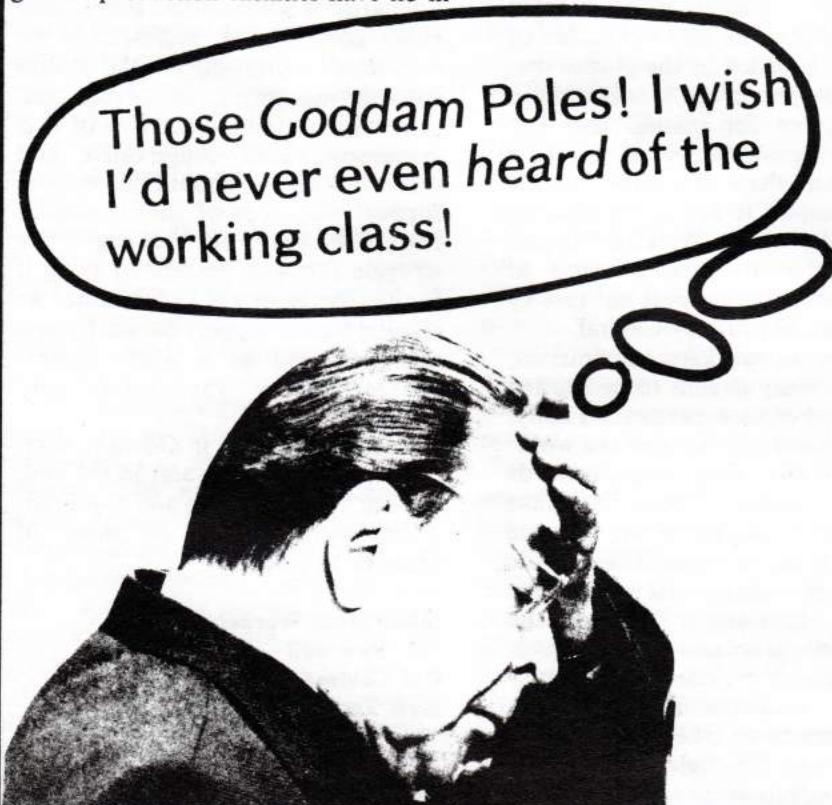
Because the Polish state oligarchy was an obstacle to the solution of Poland's social and economic crisis, the confrontation between Solidarity and the Polish state was unavoidable. But this very fact guaranteed the unworkability of the strategy of the most influential activists in Solidarity.

#### The Self-Limiting Revolution

The core of activists whose strategic orientation was dominant in Solidarity—of whom Lech Walesa was the most authoritative representative—were of the opinion that it was necessary for the movement to limit itself and avoid an open confrontation with the Bolshevik state. An effort to overthrow the state-centralist oligarchy would, in their view, only lead to a massive Russian invasion—and bloodshed and suffering for the Polish people.

Thus they proposed a strategy of negotiation, a strategy that was aimed at achieving a power-sharing arrangement in which the Church, the CP and Solidarity would share power. Walesa's negotiations with the regime always aimed at securing this tri-partite accord. The idea was not to dissolve the movement into official organisms of "co-management," but to share power from an independently-organized power base. They felt they had to accept the basic framework of the existing order, even if they would have preferred to overthrow the party/state bosses.

This idea of the "Self-Limiting Revolution," that the movement had to remain self-mobilized and independent, but without aiming at the out-and-out extirpation of Bolshevik rule—a kind of prolonged "dual power"—was also a basic assumption of another group that had influence in Solidarity—the Social Self-Defense Committee/Committee for the Defense of Workers (KOR), people like Jacek Kuron, Karel Modzelewski and Adam Michnik. They also felt that an attempt to destroy the state and construct unified workers' self-management of the whole society would have been suicidal. Said Kuron: "The most important issue is whether we should limit ourselves. . . . My general position is that if we do anything that the leaders of the USSR read as a direct threat, they will invade. I have no doubt about this. Therefore, I believe that the revolution should consciously



Those Goddam Poles! I wish I'd never even heard of the working class!

limit itself, so as to avoid this danger."

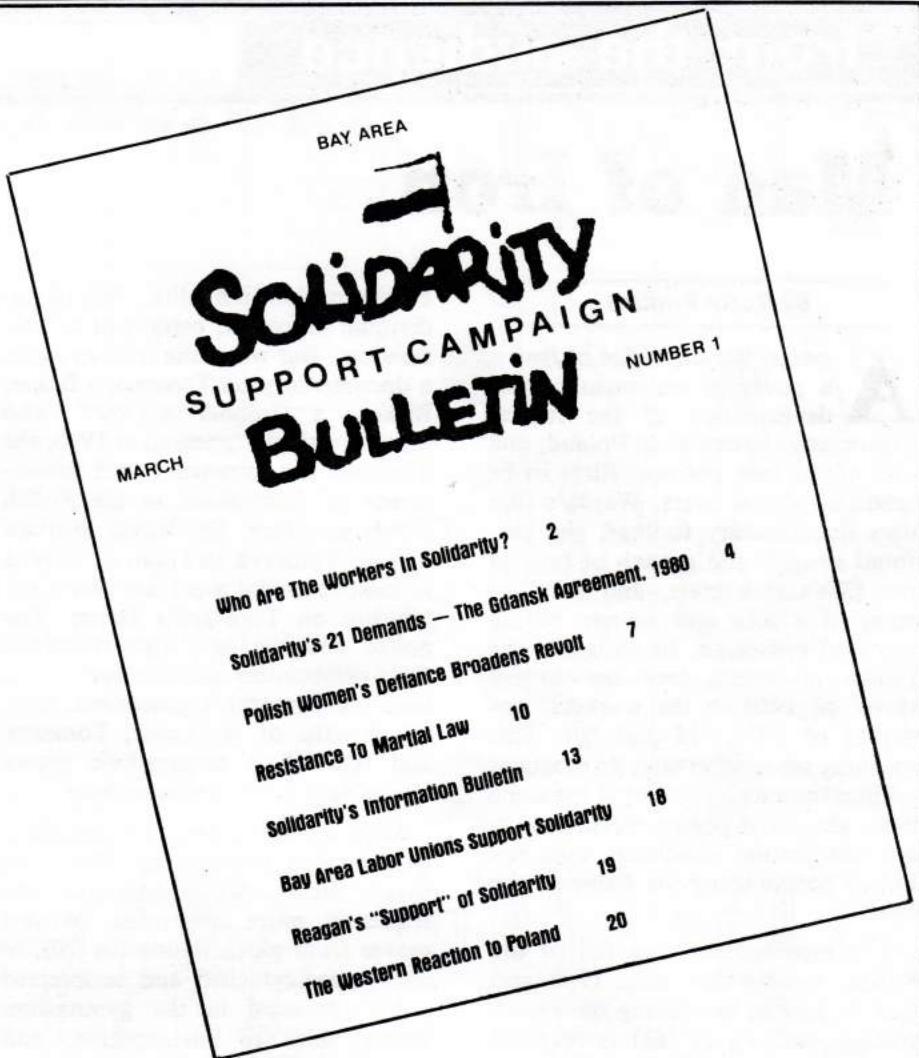
Unlike Walesa, KOR was not interested in negotiations or a tri-partite accord—but in mass movements encroaching on the power of the central oligarchy by taking control in various spheres of social life, such as workers' control in the factories.

Another indication of this idea of trying to live with the existing ruling class while forcing it to share power was the move to form political parties, such as the Polish Labor Party and the Clubs for the Self-Governing Republic, which sought to secure representation for the movement alongside the PUWP (and its front organizations), initially in the local governing bodies, and ultimately in the Sejm [Polish parliament]. The idea that the system could be pushed toward parliamentary "democracy" (i.e. electing others to rule over you, as part of a State machine whose basic social function is defense of the material interests of the bosses), as part of the power-sharing concept, is clear in the following statement by Wlodek Wypich, an editor of NTO, a journal sponsored by Warsaw Solidarity:

"When we talk of the union's program of activity, we have in mind a certain vision of a democratic society—one in which there would be full shelves in the shops as well as some degree of freedom. For some time now in the official press, mention has been made of union representation in the Sejm. . . . This is surely a very important matter, particularly as regards a future economic reform. For a reform requires a great deal of legislation which must, before acceptance, be canvassed in the trade unions." The fact that the most influential activists, who shaped the programmatic direction of Solidarity, were committed to this strategy of the "Self-Limiting revolution," had several consequences.

### **Creating Their Own Solutions**

(1) One result was a widening gap between the dominant activists and the rank-and-file, which became more evident during the course of 1981. This development was characterized in a dispatch from Warsaw written by David Ost, just before the military crackdown: "When Solidarity changed its focus from issuing demands, backed up by strike threats, and began to concentrate on longterm negotiations with the authorities at the highest levels, workers began to become less involved in union activities at all levels. If major concessions could have been exacted, the union's



### **Bay Area Solidarity Support Campaign**

#### **SOLIDARITY BULLETIN**

Information, news, commentary, etc. about the continuing struggles of Polish working people. \$2 per issue. Some copies of the first issue are still available. The second issue should be available by the time you read these lines.

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policies might have been redeemed in the eyes of the workers. But nothing has been gained at the bargaining table. The demand for direct access to radio and TV has been met by a new barrage of anti-union propaganda. Solidarity's call for a Social Economic Council with extraordinary powers was answered by the government's unilateral decision to implement its 'temporary' economic plan for 1982, thus convincing skeptics that it has no intention to change. In these conditions, Solidarity at the bargaining table has come to be seen simply as another part of the system by many workers, who have then withdrawn

from union activities in order to fight things in their own way. The series of wildcat strikes last month [November] and the drive to throw the party branches out of the workplace are manifestations of this popular mood." (*In These Times*, 12/16/81)

As workers perceived that Walesa's negotiations strategy was getting nowhere, they began to work out their own solutions.

The development of the workers' class-wide solidarity and collective action began to give working people more confidence in their industrial

(turn to page 38)

## Man of Iron

By Rudy Perkins

Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Iron* is a powerful statement on the development of the radical democratic movement in Poland, and one of the best political films to be made in several years. Wajda's film uses documentary footage, the personal struggle and growth of four of the film's characters, and the love story of a man and woman during years of resistance, to chronicle the Polish movement, from the student revolt of 1968 to the workers' uprisings of 1970, '75 and '80. This stunning montage creates an eloquent political manifesto that is, at the same time, cinematic poetry. Wajda welds our intellectual solidarity with the Polish people using the flame of the heart.

The repeated rise and fall of the Polish working class since 1970 (and their failure to act during the Polish student uprising of '68) is revealed through the lives of four students and intellectuals who are drawn into the struggle of the Lenin shipyard workers in Gdansk. Tomczyk, a student involved in the rebellion of '68, becomes embittered and withdrawn when his father and the other workers at the Gdansk yards fail to come out in support of the students. But his father's murder by Polish troops during the 1970 strike wave brings him back into the struggle. He leaves the university to work at the Lenin shipyards himself. In '76 he tries to take the yard out in a sympathy strike to protest the suppression of the workers' revolt in Ursus and Radom, but no one will join him. Union officials at the plant get him fired. Now cynical about the possibility of collective action, Toczyk pursues a course of individual protest, landing in prison. Eventually he returns to collective methods of struggle, working with the Free Trade Union movement of the late 70s. When the strikes of 1980 break out he is thrust into the strike leadership.

Agnieska is raised as part of the

Polish media/film elite, full of individual ambition, certain of artistic freedom. But when she tries to shoot a documentary on Tomczyk's father, Birkut, a "model worker" who mysteriously disappeared in 1970, she discovers the impotence and subservience of journalism in the Polish power structure. She leaves Warsaw to join Tomczyk in Gdansk, hoping at least to create a private photo exhibition on Tomczyk's father. The police and the employers continue their persecution into the very living room of Tomczyk's apartment. During months of resistance, Tomczyk and Agnieszka's camaraderie grows into a deep and passionate love.

Wajda's characters are complex, and develop through the film—this makes them more human and consequently more believable. Winkel moves from participation (in '70), to obedience, cynicism and suppressed anger (revealed in the gymnasium scene), back to participation, and again back to defeat. We feel the free air of the shipyard most keenly when Winkel finally gets through its gate. Agnieszka has moved from naivete to realism and resistance. Tomczyk, who starts radical and stays radical, changing only his tactics, is important as a symbol of the movement, and so is the least interesting as a character. But when he and Agnieszka begin to dominate the screen as Mr. and Mrs. Unwavering Solidarity, Wajda reminds us that there are many, changing degrees of political conscience, as the workers who refused to strike in '76 show up to offer their simple support to Agnieszka when Tomczyk is imprisoned.

Beyond its structure or its characters, *Man of Iron*'s haunting power comes from its forewarning of events to come. Though made early in the Solidarity period, the film repeatedly reminds us of the threat of military suppression. A film of the 1970 crackdown, which the young broadcast technician shows Winkel, opens on a posted proclamation:

"CURFEW—GDANSK Dec. 15,

1970" . . . almost 11 years to the day before the recent coup. Like the premonitions in a nightmare, the 1970 footage of Polish tanks in the street and workers being clubbed by soldiers feels like a vision of today's hidden putsch. "Every Polish worker ought to be shown this over and over again, in case there are any lingering illusions," the technician comments.

The third character, a student friend of Tomczyk's (never named in the film), ends up working as an engineering technician for Polish TV. His sympathies are with the workers but he has been left standing on the sidelines. Sweat staining his tee-shirt, his words firing out in sharp images an account of the military suppression of '68 and '70, there is something in the intensity and informality of this young technician that makes him a very American character. He serves as one of Wajda's many bridges pulling us into Poland, into the battle of the Gdansk yards itself.

Winkel, a reporter who had fallen from grace and then sleazed his way back into radio work by doing propaganda pieces for the CP, is summoned by the "big boss" to do an exposé on strike leader Tomczyk. "You know: alcoholism, hooliganism, CIA connections . . ." Winkel has an in with Tomezyk because he had been fired for his favorable stories on Birkut, ten years earlier.

Through this device of Winkel, precariously positioned between the workers and the rulers of Poland, Wajda is able to present snapshots of the Polish police and ruling class. The police are champing at the bit. "We are ready to move, all we need is the order." The Communist bureaucrats, or at least a section of them (here Wajda pulls his punches somewhat), are straining to stage an incident which can justify military intervention.

Though the film is primarily a much-needed propaganda piece for the Polish movement, it is saved from being pedantic by the structure and characters Wajda uses. The story of Tomczyk and Birkut, as the Polish re-



Terrorists at Work: "Forces of Order" attack student/faculty occupation at Warsaw Academy of Sciences last December.

sistance, is not presented in a straight and simple narrative, but pieced together by Winkel in interviews and flashbacks. We have to think about how the characters are related, what was the order and consequence of events, and suddenly we are participating in the film. The images are freed by this structure to come from a variety of viewpoints, to change continuously in tone and mood, breaking the political monotone that makes most propaganda film difficult to watch.

**L**ater the technician and Winkel have an exchange that sticks in the mind as a disturbing summary of the past year and a half in Poland.

"...Blood will flow," says Winkel.

"Civil war would follow... This time the shipyards are not alone."

"It'll peter out and then... I hate to think," Winkel finishes.

From the Solidarity-made documentary, *Workers '80*, Wajda uses the sequence where Gwiazda, a Solidarity leader, says to the CP commissioner: "What guarantees do we have that after these negotiations we will not be branded criminals on trumped-

up charges, and jailed? We do not want to live in a country where the unity of the nation is enforced by police clubs."

Even the music chosen by Wajda is often sad, lamenting, not jubilant. The mood set is as if a coup had already taken place and this is a bittersweet look back on a time whose days of joy and freedom were numbered. This tone is set not only by the music but by image as well. Our first view of Gdansk is grainy documentary footage shot from a speeding car, as if shot clandestinely with a small camera.

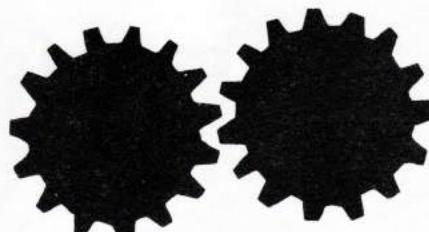
*Man of Iron* was completed in a hurry—three months instead of Wajda's usual six or more. As one Pole commented to me, "If you are not allowed to say anything for years, when you are finally able to speak, you are tempted to try to say everything at once." So Wajda hastily tried to present all that needed to be said: a critique of Polish state-socialism, the history of modern Polish resistance, a manifesto summarizing the demands made by the new movement, the poetry of this exhilarating period of freedom, and a warning that military dictatorship

was waiting in the wings. These dark months have proven that Wajda's haste was justified. In its urgency and its honesty *Man of Iron* carries to the world the revolutionary spirit that tanks cannot suppress.

## Dissident in gulag

STOCKHOLM, Sweden (AP)—An Estonian dissident charged with inciting a strike has been sentenced to a year in a Soviet labor camp, the leader of an Estonian exile group reported. The dissident, 52-year-old Dr. Endel Rose, was arrested Nov. 27 in Tallinn and accused of copying and spreading leaflets urging a 30-minute "strike for democracy" on Dec. 1.

—San Francisco Examiner





Gdansk shipyard workers

# Polish Women and the Polish Revolution

By Bruce Allen

**B**efore the great strikes of the summer of 1980, which set in motion the events culminating in the present military regime in Poland, almost no one gave much thought to the position of women in East European countries like Poland. It was a subject largely ignored by many on the Left. The various leftist tendencies either considered the question of minor importance or were sufficiently pro-Soviet as to carefully avoid any potential challenge to the credibility of the regimes involved.

However, thanks to Poland's workers and the emergence of an indigenous Polish women's liberation movement, that silence is becoming increasingly inexcusable.

What follows is an attempt to analyze the position of women in Poland, their struggles as women and as workers, and the implications for the workers' movement. The roles of the state and the Church will be given particular attention.

Polish women experience a degree of oppression which is comparable to the situation of women in the West. Women make up roughly 44% of the workforce. This means they have two jobs; one as a wage laborer and the other as an unpaid worker in the home.

They endure widespread discrimination in wages and employment opportunities. Women tend to be concentrated in low-skilled, non-technical job ghettos. These problems are endured out of sheer economic necessity because most Polish households could not make ends meet on one income.

Discrimination also extends into the field of education. Often, if a woman and a man qualify equally for placement in an institution of higher education, the male gets preference.

In its defense, the bureaucratic regime contends that there are extensive social services available to relieve women from their traditional role. In fact, under Polish "socialism" the situation is not substantially better than in the West. Child-care facilities are scarce. The only institutionalized alternatives are expensive kindergartens which are beyond the means of most working-class women. Communal services like shared laundries are similarly scarce and, predictably, women in the bureaucratic elite have preferred access to them.

Polish family life remains very traditional. Consequently, the burden of patriarchy in domestic life adds another dimension to women's oppression. Pol-

ish men, like their Western counterparts, are of no help in this regard. Benefiting from patriarchy themselves, they tend to enforce this additional burden by expecting women to perform all of the traditional tasks which go with being a housewife and mother.

The economic crisis, and the resulting scarcity of goods in the shops, worsens this situation. It is overwhelmingly women who fill the lines outside the shops. This additional burden cuts deeply into the very limited time women have to themselves. They endure a uniquely Polish version of the poverty of everyday life.

The state actively perpetuates this situation. It encourages women to remain confined to their traditional role in the family structure. For instance, with respect to child-rearing, the state holds women legally responsible for the education of their offspring.

In matters pertaining to birth control and sexuality the state is directly responsible for enforcing another aspect of the oppression of women. The contraceptive devices it provides are short in supply and poor in quality. Women frequently resort to abortions as a method of birth control because of this. Some have aborted as many as ten times.

Resorting to abortions poses some very difficult choices because authorized facilities are considered poor in quality. The alternative is a dangerous, illegal abortion. Added to these problems are the inevitable social stigmas of having an abortion in a predominantly Catholic country.

Nonetheless, the situation has been worse. Prior to 1956 *all* abortions were illegal. Polish Stalinism had followed the example of its Soviet counterpart. In the USSR abortions had been banned on June 27, 1936 as part of a general restoration of conservative values in family life.

Sex education is another sorry reflection on the state's backwardness and lack of concern over the consequences of unwanted pregnancies among single women. Krystena Kowalewska, a Polish feminist, commented on this problem: "There is no sex education. You never see a radio or TV program on sex. The only sex education book in Poland was written by Dr. Wistock, and it's so bad it just makes people laugh."<sup>1</sup>

An integral part of the state itself, Poland's leading official women's organization, The Women's League, shares in the blame. Shortly after its formation in



**Women march against hunger in Lodz, 1981**

1945 it stood as an indication of the regime's recognition that women had their own specific problems. As such it facilitated those early measures of the regime which raised the social and political position of women above what had existed in pre-war Poland, i.e. steps towards legal equality and the entrance of greater numbers of women into the labor force.

Today, there is nothing positive about this organization's role. According to an official report (1969):

"The cells of The Women's League aim to... help their members educate their children and... better organize their work at home. On the initiative of The Women's League, a committee for domestic problems has been set up. This not only tries to make domestic activities more rational, but also organizes the training of instructors in this field and popularizes knowledge about domestic activities."<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, according to Kowalewska, the official organizations "...are led by party women who are not interested in the specific oppression of women as women."<sup>3</sup>

The state organisms for women serve to integrate them into the patriarchal social order of contemporary Poland by

mechanisms directly controlled and mobilized by the party bureaucracy to serve its interests. It is no wonder that contemporary Polish feminists believe that:

"The only way to really force them to change some day is to build up independent women's organizations."<sup>4</sup>

#### **The Church**

The bureaucratic ruling class and the system it administers do not deserve all or even most of the blame for the situation of Polish women. Poland's Roman Catholic Church bears an even greater responsibility—having had centuries to instill its patriarchal values. Furthermore, it looks to the forces of opposition to aid in the perpetuation of these values.

Hatred of the regime has often been used to the Church's advantage. For instance, in the early 1950s the Stalinist Bierut government instituted a few progressive measures for women. As noted before, it was responsible for a sharp rise in the number of women entering the workforce, thereby undermining their traditional position in society. However, other policies of the regime—especially its (counter-productive) attacks upon the Church, made it so unpopular that all of its policies were discredited—both good and bad.

The Polish Church itself is a bastion of

1. "Feminist Group in Poland," *In Struggle!*, Vol. 9 No. 20, p. 6.

2. Koski, B., "The Situation of Women in Poland," *Critique* No. 8, p. 81.

3. *Op cit*, p. 6.

4. *Ibid*, p. 6.

extremely conservative values. It holds the patriarchal family in great esteem, with family farms being particularly cherished—revealing the persistence of a feudal mentality.

The church fiercely opposes divorce, birth control and abortions. Last year the Church mounted a campaign to restore a legal ban on abortions. It circulated petitions across Poland which were signed by *hundreds of thousands of people*. This raises the question of where the Catholic influenced workers' movement stands on issues critical to the liberation of women.

The answer is less than encouraging.

Solidarnosc has from its outset been a male-dominated union. Its historic first congress last September, if anything, made matters worse by re-electing Walesa—a devout Catholic with an archaic view of women. Within the everyday operation of the union, women were confined to a subordinate status performing primarily administrative and secretarial functions.

Still, Solidarnosc either won or attempted to win some important, if limited, gains for women. The best known is

weekends gave them more time to themselves than they had ever had in their working lives.

Even so, these achievements marked only small steps towards the realization of women's liberation. The workers' movement really made only one major breakthrough for women. It democratized Polish society to the point where women could come out and begin to autonomously wage their own struggles. In turn, more radical demands could be posed which otherwise would never have been taken up.

In relation to the Church, this development was ironic indeed. For the Church's initial defense of basic civil liberties and limited support to oppositional activities helped to make this new opening possible. In effect, it inadvertently fostered the development of a movement directed against its doctrines.

#### Feminist Rebirth

The re-birth of Polish feminism stands as one of the great achievements of the 1980-81 events. The new movement began in late October of 1980 with meetings involving approximately 100 women at the University of Warsaw's

demands and goals. Their realization would radically transform Polish society for the better.

As noted there is much to be desired about the workers' movement's orientation towards women. Nonetheless, the embryonic women's movement saw a need to relate to it; the movement attempted to elicit the workers' support by presenting its demands to them.

An unfortunate scarcity of information exists on the progress made. However, a Canadian who visited Poland last year talked with some Solidarnosc militants familiar with the feminists. They reportedly explained that the lack of a positive response to the women's demands was due to the fact that these would cause a split in the workers' movement. For their part, the feminists feel very alienated from Solidarnosc. Kowalewska made this clear in having noted how many Solidarnosc members "...are still attached to the old models of the family where the man works and the mother stays at home to cook and take care of the kids."<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to this dilemma there are recent events in Polish history which

*"The only institution that has thrived under martial law has been the church. 'The churches are filled with people again,' said the Rev. Jozef Tischner, a noted theologian in Krakow. 'A year ago, they weren't. The matters of Solidarity were consuming people. And now they've returned.'*

—Toronto Globe and Mail

the provision in Point 18 of the Gdansk agreements for three-year's paid maternity leave. The union confederation also demanded the expansion of childcare facilities, a lower retirement age for women, and the right of pregnant women to safe jobs.

Other gains were made indirectly. An example is Solidarnosc's consistent demand that the largest wage increases go to the lowest paid workers. Polish women disproportionately qualify.

A case in point occurred in the autumn of 1980. The teaching and health care occupations both employ large numbers of women and are underpaid. In Gdansk these workers struck, occupying government offices to back demands for higher wages and improved government funding of educational and medical services. Inspired by their action, local transit workers, along with a thousand medical students, staged sympathy strikes.

The effective strikes for work-free Saturdays during the winter of 1980-81 were similarly positive for women. Two day

Sigma Club. Most of the participants were students.

The struggle they began was for "... the equalizing of the social and economic status of the two sexes."<sup>9</sup> In waging this struggle these feminists sought to learn from the experiences of—and make contact with—the women's movement in the West and elsewhere and apply the knowledge gained according to Polish circumstances. Or as one of them, Krystina Kowalewska, put it, "We don't want to be a carbon copy of the Western movement."<sup>10</sup>

In practice they decided to engage in a variety of agitational and cultural activities. One of these was to organize "... a seminar circle on Polish women who have managed to break out of the traditional mode of existence to become artists or scientists."<sup>11</sup>

The Polish feminists also formulated a program containing an extensive list of

5. Polish Feminists, "Our Tasks," *In Struggle!* Vol. 9 No. 20, p. 7.

6. *Op cit*, p.6.

7. *Ibid*, p. 6.

exemplify how women have made major contributions to the workers' movement. Rosa Luxemburg was one such woman. As a Marxist theoretician and revolutionary critical of the Bolshevik leadership, her achievements were outstanding although her advocacy of women's rights was naively predicated on—and compromised by—her belief that socialism would in itself emancipate women.

Women textile workers at Lodz originated and extensively employed the tactic of sit-down strikes in 1931\*. A generation later, in February 1971, women workers in these same mills demonstrated their power once again. They were the backbone of a 10,000-strong strike which forced the bureaucracy to repeal enormous food price increases instituted two months previously. Earlier

(turn to page 41)

8. *Ibid*, p. 6.

\*Six years later the same tactic was employed at Flint, Michigan in the great sit-down strike which brought the UAW into the North American auto industry.

# Revolution for Freedom in El Salvador?

## Democratic Fascism?

Our leaflet "Revolution for Freedom in El Salvador?" (text on pages 21-23)—a commentary on the guerilla army strategy for revolution, now unfolding in El Salvador, and on what it portends, was written prior to the March 28 elections in that war-and-recession-wracked nation.

Duarte's defeat has signaled the end of the semblance of reform—brought to center stage by the young military officer's coup of 1979, in the aftermath of the fall of Somoza in neighboring Nicaragua. Now even the pretense of reform is being dropped. The first act of the parliamentary fascists, after their victory at the polls, was repeal of the never-carried-out Phase II of the agrarian reform, which called for expropriating the coffee growing industry—the bastion of the ruling oligarchy's wealth for a century.

Now that would-be social reforms can't be pointed to by the U.S. government, to justify its support for Salvadoran State-Terrorism, the new rationale being offered is "democracy"—"The people spoke at the polling booths." (A similar justification could've been offered for supporting Hitler in 1933...)

In the past, when acting to set up regimes more closely allied to U.S. strategic and economic purposes, the U.S. government hasn't been so fussy about maintaining a democratic facade. Sending in the Marines—as in

the Dominican Republic in 1965—was more their style. But in the wake of the Vietnam debacle, the U.S. rulers are constrained to present their interventions in a better light.

In truth, the Salvadoran elections had nothing to do with democracy. The Salvadoran state is an institution that exists to defend the material interests of the bosses, and the existing system of exploitation. Even if the elections had been free and open, they don't challenge this social function. A change in the faces in the government offices will not challenge the existence of oppression.

In fact the situation of the rulers of El Salvador is not an enviable one. Mainly due to the ever-increasing costs of its civil war, the Salvadoran state is virtually bankrupt—last year it was in arrears on debts of \$65.5 million to private international banks. Massive capital flight has ravaged the private sector, with net capital outflow of over \$800 million between 1979 and 1982.

An International Monetary Fund emergency program for El Salvador—supported by the Reagan administration—proposes a Reagan-style cutback of social spending and reduction of the number of government employees, and forecasts a situation where only massive foreign aid will keep the Salvadoran economy afloat—including 35% of the country's imports. As one officer of the World Bank has remarked: "What you see is the creation of the same artificial economy, kept alive only by U.S. military expenditure and assistance, that you had in South Vietnam a decade ago."

## Can the left learn from history?

The central focus of our leaflet was the revolutionary strategy of the FMLN/FDR. We might consider what the relationship is between these two organizations. The FMLN is not just the army of the FDR. On the contrary, the FMLN is a loose front—first formed in 1980—of five organizations that are political parties in their own right—political groups that have organized their own armies.

The various mass organizations of the FMLN groups are essentially "transmission belts" for the goals of their respective "vanguards." These mass organizations are in turn components of the FDR. The FDR is a broad inter-class front of political parties, unions and student, professional and business associations.

In reality, the strength of organizations in the FDR ultimately will depend on which FMLN groups they are aligned with. Social-democratic leaders like Manuel Ungo may have some clout now because the support of the social-democratic Second International is important in the struggle against the existing state. But in the absence of their own guerilla armies or mass organizations, this won't mean much when the revolution succeeds in toppling the existing State-Terrorist regime.

The very fact that the FMLN leadership look to Cuba and Vietnam as positive examples gives us an idea about what the FMLN will create once they get their hands on state power.

The basic problem is that guerillaism—as a revolutionary process—favors the emergence of a new state-centralist ruling class—based on the State's top-down control of social and industrial affairs. A number of revolutions in the 20th century—in Vietnam, Cuba, China, Russia, etc.—have shown that it is possible to overthrow capitalism but without creating genuine socialism—i.e., real workers social power. Instead of eliminating exploitation and class oppression, there is simply a change in its form. Can the left assimilate the lessons of this experience?

## Nicaragua: Towards State-Centralism

The tendency of a state-centralist oligarchy to emerge as the outgrowth of a guerilla revolution is being demonstrated a few miles to the south of El Salvador, in Nicaragua.

The Sandinista junta has created a huge state machine—controlling over 40% of the nation's economy, and ruling over the masses of the people. Key decisions affecting the whole society are essentially made by the Sandinista leadership in private. The mass



organizations—such as the unions and the local revolutionary committees—are used as vehicles to mobilize support—in a top-down way—for the policies of the FSLN “vanguard.”

Nicaraguan society is not run on the basis of democratic self-management, i.e. decisions being made by mass, self-managed bodies created and controlled by the people themselves.

In order to have a self-managed society—i.e. genuine socialism—freedom of expression is not a luxury—it is essential. The freedom of debate of ideas within the working class, the freedom to try to affect the decisions of the majority, is essential if the masses of the people are going to really control and shape their own destiny.

Freedom to organize or express opposition under the FSLN junta was already being severely circumscribed before the declaration of a state of emergency in March. Since then, the situation has become even worse.

Even before the tightening up in March, the government did not allow any organized opposition to issue leaflets, hang banners or posters or call demonstrations. The FSLN junta has a virtual monopoly on the dissemination of information—especially now that prior censorship has been imposed and news reports curtailed. Two of the three newspapers are under state control as are the radio and TV.

The FSLN leaders are Fidelistas and want to move Nicaragua in the direction of a Cuban-type set-up—in other words, one more state-centralist regime. Even the farmer-worker co-operatives—formed by the workers themselves during the revolution that overthrew Somoza—have now been nationalized by the junta.

The FSLN does face one significant rival within the working class—the 50,000-member CTN (Confederation of Nicaraguan Workers). Many of its members work in agriculture, especially the sugar cane fields.

Like the CSN in Quebec and the CFDT in France, the CTN is an affiliate of the World Labor Federation. Originally founded as a Catholic Church-supported rival to the socialist labor internationals, a number of its affiliates have moved to the left in recent decades. The CTN is a left-wing union of this sort: “The CTN reiterates the need to guarantee the development of a union movement that is democratic, independent, unified, revolutionary and class-conscious . . . so as to rebuff every effort to impose a single union hierarchy that would be totally subordinate to the party in power.”

The CTN has faced various forms of harassment from the Sandinista regime—“coercive acts to induce workers to disaffiliate from our federation; organized campaigns of defamation on the part of the official press; the surveillance of our local offices and the houses of our leaders; the destruction of our vehicles; the prohibition, under threat of imprisonment, from freely visiting centers of work controlled by the state.” (Quotes are from a CTN Manifesto.)

The CTN believes that the sort of society the Marxist-Leninists of the FSLN want to create is “a model of oppression and new privileges; this model violates the most ele-

mentary rights of workers, as has been demonstrated in Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and most recently in Poland, where our brothers have organized Solidarity in order to confront the bureaucracy and corruption of that regime.”

The CTN’s support for Solidarnosc is appropriate—given the FSLN’s support for the repressive regimes in Eastern Europe. Last July “El Diario”—a paper that adheres closely to the FSLN line—hailed East Germany as “an admirable society” which was “organized on the basis of jobs for all, justice and peace.” Given their fondness for the barracks-state of Prussian Communism, it is no surprise they—along with Cuba—supported the Jaruzelski crackdown on Solidarnosc last December.

As an alternative, the CTN calls for “the development of a foreign policy which is not aligned with either of the imperialist blocs (capitalist or Communist).”

Saying that they are “committed to the construction of a society which is truly democratic and pluralist, and founded on economic, social and cultural democracy,” the CTN says this requires “the active and determined participation of the organized working class, in the form of self-management both within the national economy and in the individual enterprise.”

Of course, it isn’t clear here what they mean by “democracy”—this is compatible with a social-democratic perspective—and their social-democrat-inclined sister union—the CFDT in France—also has used the language of “self-management.” While the present political ideas of the CTN may have their limitations—similar perhaps to the limitations of Solidarnosc or the CFDT—at this point the CTN seems to be the only independent and democratic mass organization through which Nicaraguan working people can fight for their aspirations and their freedoms.

The increasing consolidation of a total centralization of power in the hands of the state has also provoked opposition from other participants in the anti-Somoza revolution—such as Eden Pastora—who, as “Commandante Zero,” gained notoriety for his daring attacks on the Somocista regime. Recently he has joined up with the social-democratic opposition, headquartered in Costa Rica. In part these people have been irked by the FSLN’s drive—cautious though it has been—to expropriate more and more small businesses, which they view as a betrayal of the FSLN’s programmatic commitment to a mixed economy (similar to the FDR/FMLN program for El Salvador); also, the failure to establish a Western-style representative “democracy”—i.e., a form of state where the people who rule in the interests of the bosses must submit themselves to periodic popular elections to keep their jobs, as here in the U.S.

While we are saddened by the emergence of another totalistic state-centralism—and the loss of popular freedoms—in Nicaragua, we don’t see the social-democratic program as superior—maintaining the “freedom” to sell 40-hour-a-week chunks of your life to capitalist bosses and the farce of electoral statism. The libertarian alternative would

also entail expropriating the property of the capitalists—big and small—in Nicaragua—putting the economy under the collective self-management of all the people, a society of free and equal humans based on mass participation in direct democracy.

Though the Marxist-Leninist guerilla armies in El Salvador, Guatemala and elsewhere in Latin America can’t be a basis for popular self-emancipation, the consolidation of new state-centralist regimes isn’t “inevitable”—the very fact of revolution, of instability and discontent throughout the region, and the possible downfall of the State-Terrorist regimes, provides an opening—a possibility of the masses of the people inserting themselves into the process through the development of genuinely independent and self-managed movements of working people, which could provide the basis for self-emancipation.

### Latin American Libertarianism

The basic ideas in our leaflet—about self-managed labor organization and workers’ militias as the alternative to guerilla armies run by vanguardist political groups—did not arise in a vacuum. We didn’t originate these ideas. They have long been present in Latin American labor and revolutionary movements. E.G., in their statement of November 1980 the “Coordinadora Libertaria Latino-Americana”[reprinted in this issue]—a group of Latin American libertarian exiles in Europe—refer to the Bolivian miners’ assemblies and the “cordones industriales” created by Chilean workers in the early 1970s as “indicating the way forward” for the revolutionary popular movements in Latin America.

The “cordones industriales” were worker co-ordinating councils, made up of delegates elected by the workers’ assemblies at various workplaces, including many shops that had been seized by the workforce. This is the sort of thing we were proposing. We projected the possible extension of this type of mass workers’ democracy to the level of the whole society—we think it foreshadows a whole social order.

The issue of the relationship between a working class seeking its emancipation and the armed conflict that seems to be an unavoidable part of the overthrow of oppression is not a new question for anarcho-syndicalism. The principles of the International Workers Association—an organization that included hundreds of thousands of Latin American workers in the 1920s/30s, in organizations like the Argentine Regional Workers Federation (FORA)—had this to say on this issue: “[Anarcho-syndicalists] do not forget that the decisive struggles between the capitalism of today and the Free Communism of tomorrow, will not take place without serious clashes. They recognize violence, therefore, as a means of defense against the violence of the ruling classes, in the struggle of the revolutionary people for the expropriation of the land and the means of production. Just as this expropriation cannot be successfully carried through except by the revolutionary mass economic organizations of the workers, so also the defense of the revolution should be

*in the hands of the mass labor organizations, and not in those of any military or other organization, separate from the mass labor organizations." The central point in our leaflet was the application of this basic anarcho-syndicalist principle to the current situation in El Salvador.*

#### **Who are we?**

*Our own Latin American solidarity activities go back several years. Through our association with the International Workers Association (the anarcho-syndicalist international), we had been receiving information about the situation in a number of Latin American countries and appeals on behalf of Latin American libertarians. Because of these channels of information we were able to participate with others in concerted solidarity activities.*

*Thus, for example, at the time of the coup in Bolivia in July 1980, a number of IWA-sympathizing groups were able to protest the imprisonment of activists of the COB (Bolivian Workers Central—a mili-*

*tant independent union federation) and the Bolivian human rights movement. At the same time, we were able to express our concern for the fate of Liber Forti—a well-known anarcho-syndicalist and cultural secretary of the Miners' Federation, who was one of those arrested. (Forti had been the target of an attempted assassination during a previous coup. After his arrest in July 1980, he was subsequently released into exile by the Bolivian regime.)*

*The Norwegian Syndicalist Federation—the IWA section in Norway—provided not only information but also a good example. They had been successful in getting local unions—through the insistence of their people in those unions—involved in these solidarity efforts and they were also instrumental in organizing a number of labor protests against the repressive regimes in South America.*

*Also, about two years ago, the anarcho-syndicalists in Chile were beginning to re-organize, including not only the organizing of an oppositional rank and file tendency in*

*the unions but also participation in neighborhood committees and a Women's Liberation Front. But due to the depression-level unemployment and low wages—thanks to repression of the labor movement—they were in need of financial assistance to carry out their political activities. Thus we set up a Chile Solidarity Fund which ultimately succeeded in raising about \$500 on behalf of the Chilean libertarians.*

*Like other tendencies in the workers' movement, libertarians in Latin America are fighting for their rights and their lives in the face of severe repression. The successes and difficulties of libertarian militants receives little or no public attention. We are trying to change this, and provide support for libertarians, and working class movements "that practice autonomy of the masses and move in the direction of self-emancipation" (as the CLLA says), by translating and publicizing information, raising money, organizing demonstrations and educational meetings to express our solidarity and inform the public.*

The following text is from a leaflet "Revolution for Freedom in El Salvador?" which we distributed at a March 27 demonstration in Oakland, CA against U.S. intervention in El Salvador.

**Do you feel sick with each grisly report of the war in El Salvador—a war that is pitting U.S.-backed generals, coffee barons and landlords against the Salvadoran people???**

If you're like most people, you instinctively side with the Salvadoran people. You, like us, oppose growing U.S. intervention in Central America.

Thousands of people in the U.S. and Europe are actively exploring ways to build support for the Salvadoran people's struggle—and to develop concrete opposition to further U.S. intervention. We realize that this activity is more than a personal expression of solidarity with a just cause. It's needed desperately to stop the million\$\$\$ in U.S. "aid" to El Salvador. Why? Because U.S. dollars keep the Duarte coffee dictatorship afloat in a sea of blood—the blood that flows daily from the sadistic guns and machetes of the U.S.-trained Salvadoran "forces of order."

#### **State-Terrorism Defends Class Rule**

The underlying cause of the civil war in El Salvador is *not* small bands of Cuban-influenced "terrorists." It is brutal class oppression. It is the concentration of social power and wealth in the greedy hands of a tiny minority—the Salvadoran ruling class.

Ruling classes dominate and exploit the working people of all countries—whether they have a capitalist economic set-up, like the U.S. or a bureaucratic statist arrangement, like the USSR, Cuba, etc. Civil war has erupted in El Salvador because ruling-class oppression has reached intolerable proportions.

The real terrorist in El Salvador is a savage institution that has tortured, raped or murdered over 30,000 people in the last two years. It is the Salvadoran state.

Like states the world over, the Salvadoran state speaks and acts for the ruling class minority whose economic power and vast possessions are stolen from working people's labor and social resources. Working people can have no real control over a state and its professional

armed bodies—just as we can have no control within the oppressive, top-down economic arrangements that states exist to maintain.

Salvadoran working people have begun to realize that ending their own oppression must begin with the military defeat of the state-terrorism and its beneficiaries—Salvadoran and U.S. bosses and generals. This growing realization is what gives the civil war in El Salvador its class character.

Like any revolution-in-the-making, though, the success of the Salvadoran people's struggle for freedom depends on the character of the opposition movement—and on who controls the guns after the smoke clears.

What political currents animate the struggle to overthrow the Salvadoran state-terrorism?

#### **This is the opposition?**

Most anti-U.S.-imperialism groups (including socialist ones) in the U.S. and Europe pin the hopes of the Salvadoran people on the leftist opposition known as the FDR/FMLN (Democratic Revolutionary Front/Frente Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front). The FDR is the coalition political front of the FMLN. The FMLN is the unified organization of the various guerilla armies fighting the Duarte dictatorship.

Will the program of the FDR/FMLN lead to the emancipation of workers and *campesinos*? Will a new state apparatus controlled by a ruling class emerge?

The FDR/FMLN fiercely oppose the tyranny of the Duarte dictatorship. They promise to replace it with "economic justice" for workers. But the program and politics of the FDR/FMLN will most likely lead to either a "mixed" capitalist economic set-up like Nicaragua or to Cuban-style bureaucratic statism. Neither means working class emancipation.

The FDR/FMLN's program condemns property privately-owned by absentee coffee capital, but champions private property and "public" (i.e. state-controlled) ownership that would mean top-down, minority control

by businessmen and politicians. It opposes a ruling class—the current one in El Salvador—but proposes a new form of class rule, a new form of exploitation. It cries out against the totalitarianism of the Duarte military state, yet offers workers nothing more than a promise that the FDR/FMLN state would protect political freedoms.

Under the FDR/FMLN scheme of things, workers would be locked out of all vital social decision-making. They would entrust their future to the small group of Stalinist, Maoist and social-democratic politicians and military commanders who would control the new FDR/FMLN state. In fact, many FDR/FMLN leaders are career politicians who have served in previous military juntas. Many of them now speak of a “negotiated settlement” and a role for current government bureaucrats and generals in some “new” state set-up.

#### **Do “national liberation movements” liberate?**

Some groups engaged in support for the Salvadoran struggle think the issues that we raise here are “divisive” or even “reactionary.” They insist that defeating the U.S.-backed junta is the main objective: that to question the program and political approach of the FDR/FMLN “objectively” hinders the freedom struggle. But can anything short of *genuine* liberation justify all of the courage and sacrifice, blood and tears of the social war now underway in El Salvador?

We don’t think you have to give up the struggle against U.S. imperialism in Central America to raise questions about the politics of the FDR/FMLN and the same is



## **“Can anything short of genuine liberation justify all of the courage and sacrifice, blood and tears of the social war now underway in El Salvador?”**

true of other national liberation movements. Our questions are sadly relevant because numerous revolutions in the 20th century have overthrown a capitalist ruling class—but without liberating the masses of working and farming people from state oppression and economic exploitation. Revolutions in places like Cuba or China have merely marked a transition to a new form of class oppression, not based on capitalist private property, but based on top-down control of industrial and social affairs by a class of party/state hierarchs.

Let’s face it. The path to genuine liberation in El Salvador and the Third World is full of obstacles that tend to perpetuate class rule. The gross state-terrorism of U.S.-aligned states like El Salvador requires that workers organize their own military power. Yet, state-terrorism makes openly organizing mass opposition movements difficult. As a result, guerilla armies emerge that are not controlled by the workers—they aren’t controlled by mass workers’ organizations, run directly and democratically by the rank-and-file. The guerilla armies tend to be run by political groups, which are necessarily a small minority of the populace. This tends to set in motion a dangerous social dynamic.

In the course of the struggle against the old state, the emerging mass organizations are subordinated to the military/political command of a leftist minority. This embryonic state-in-the-making—the “dual” power that challenges that of the old state-terrorism—is not the democracy of self-managed labor organizations, which field their own democratic workers’ militias. It is the minority-controlled military/political apparatus of the guerilla movement leaders—leaders who seek to integrate, disarm or replace any mass workers’ organizations that emerge, and make them powerless junior partners of the new state power.

We do not belittle the real improvements in daily life that frequently accompany victorious national liberation movements. To the degree that the mass organizations play an active role in defeating the old imperialist ruling class, some of the worst forms of exploitation/repression are wiped away. To the degree that the mass organizations and militias are dominated by a new state of politicians and generals controlling a professional army/police apparatus, the newly-won gains and political freedoms are jeopardized.

Just ask Iranian men and women, who are being ruthlessly deprived by the "anti-imperialist" Islamic Republic. Or ask Nicaraguan and Zimbabwean workers, whose "anti-imperialist" governments have declared strikes illegal and close down media not controlled by the state.

Will the working class in El Salvador hold real social power through mass democratic labor organizations, controlled from below, or will the armed struggle just lead to the creation of a new state—one more armed apparatus not directly possessed by the workers through their own self-managed mass organizations? To answer this question, lessons must be drawn from the failure of national liberation movements to liberate—hard lessons seemingly more easily grasped by workers than by many "socialists."

#### **From self-managed struggle to self-managed society**

A social order doesn't just drop out of the sky. The society that emerges from a revolution will already be foreshadowed by the way the struggle against the powers-that-be has been organized. **Those who control the process of social reconstruc-**

**"Will the Salvadoran working class hold real social power through mass democratic labor organizations, controlled from below, or will the armed struggle just lead to the creation of a new state—and a new form of class oppression?"**

**tion will determine who controls and benefits from the new social set-up.** The antidote to building a "leftist" junta in El Salvador is conducting the armed struggle by means of a mass worker militia, controlled and organized by self-managed labor organizations. This way, Salvadoran working people could ensure that they end up in power, instead of finding out after the smoke clears that they've just hoisted into power a new class of bureaucrats, bosses and generals.

We think the alternative to national liberation governments that govern instead of liberate is the control of society by unions based on the face-to-face democracy of mass worker assemblies and society-wide congresses of all working people. Congresses that are made up of delegates elected to present the ideas and proposals decided by the local worker assemblies. Congresses that include delegates of groups defined by other social interests than employment in industry, groups whose interests are consistent with working class emancipation—students, women, elderly people, etc. The armed defense of the workers' revolution would be solely the responsibility of a militia organized and controlled by these unified mass workers' organizations.

Through the class-wide congresses, in which all working people are represented, the rank-and-file labor organizations could plan and direct, in a genuinely democratic way, the management of the

whole economy, and ensure that production is geared to satisfying the collective needs and desires of the working class majority, within the constraints of the available resources. Any austerity made inevitable by the revolutionary territory's position within the larger capitalist world market would be best implemented by the workers themselves—not bureaucrats or a self-appointed leadership.

Workers could ensure that any committees that they elect to carry out the decisions of the congresses and co-ordinate economic and militia activities would not become a new set of order-givers, an entrenched bureaucracy with separate interests of its own, through such measures as immediate recall by the ranks, mandatory rotation from office, absence of special pay or privileges, etc. The idea is to avoid establishing any separate decision-making power that rules over the mass of working people at the base of society. To be free is to be genuinely self-determining.

By self-directing the reconstruction of society through self-managed labor organizations, working

people would be defining their own future. They'd be taking control of their own lives. And that's what the struggle for freedom is all about. And they'd also be creating a model of liberation for workers everywhere to study and emulate.

The struggle of workers against bosses is a worldwide struggle. Developing unity in action across national frontiers is crucial to victory in this struggle. A workers' revolution that is successfully isolated by the world's states is more likely to fail. Within Central America, this suggests the importance of the development of unity of revolutionary workers' movements throughout the region. But it is important for working people everywhere to support—and try to learn from—each others' social struggles.

*Agree? Disagree? Outraged? Confused?*

Want to talk about it?  
Get in touch.

#### **ideas & action**

P.O. Box 40400  
San Francisco, CA 94110

#### **Libertarian Workers Group**

P.O. Box 692  
Old Chelsea Station  
New York, NY 10113

# Coordinadora Libertaria Latino-Americana: Perspective and Goals

**Editors' Note:** Coordinadora Libertaria Latino-Americana is an organization of latin American anarchist/libertarian socialist exiles, for coordinating their activities in the Paris area; they have also sponsored conferences of libertarian exiles from all over Europe. The following statement appeared in the January/February 1981 issue of the Spanish libertarian magazine Bicicleta, which was devoted to Latin America. Translation by Tony Powell. The CLLA's address: Cercle Garcia Lorca, 15 rue Gracieuse, 75005 Paris, France.

The recent events that have occurred in several zones of Latin America show us that after four centuries of submission, and very nearly a century of struggle by organized workers, and of a little less [than that], by political organizations, the strong recovery of the common elements in the Latin American struggles is beginning. And this [is true despite] the possible repercussions of a probable sharpening of Yankee interventionism, brought by the election of the "super-reactionary" Reagan to the presidency of the USA.

The exploitation imposed by the bourgeoisie, by the large land-owners, by the State, and by foreign capitalism, is the common characteristic of all our peoples, from the *conquistas* to the present day....

Capitalist exploitation and imperialist sacking, which denies consideration to the necessities of Latin America's own development and the potentialities [of its peoples], has been manifested in a long series of incidents, with the toleration of every kind of government.

Without attributing to reality things that only exist in our desires,... we can say that, since the start of the popular struggles in Latin America at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, three fundamental [political] positions for economic change in the Latin American countries stand out, and these positions have, in one way or another, been [reflected in] the pattern of political events till today:

(1) *Bourgeois Liberalism*—evolutionist, its perspective doesn't reflect the differences between capitalists and workers, between exploiters and exploited, between dominators and the dominated. Its liberal content has been made irrelevant by social tensions and repression....

(2) *Political Reformism*—sometimes with a populist tinge, and accessible to some sectors of the bourgeoisie under certain economic conditions. The reformist position basically acts for political/judicial changes in the system,... proposing social laws—without questioning the basic relationship of the class that dominates the state [to the rest of the population]. This platform—with its proposed social reforms—has aided the strengthening of the paternalist bourgeois state.... Moreover, it

Particularly active in the popular process, the objective of the [ideological] organizations is essentially socialist and anti-bureaucratic, putting at the center the qualitative and quantitative development of the working class [movement], as a form of human and social survival.

These are the three perspectives, then, which we find *most* outstanding in the Latin American political delineations which have in some way been linked to popular needs. Without of course, forgetting the existence of the most various political shades, from fascist platforms, as the ideal of the right, passing through the intermediate political positions, to the anti-organizational individualist. But not all of these have played a major role in [Latin American] politics, in its overall direction and development....

We believe, then, that today, as we stated in our bulletin of May 1st of 1968: "The tragic economic and social situation that we all know (hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment, low salaries, lack of housing and of health services, etc.), is in addition to the implantation of military regimes of fascist inspiration in most of [our] countries. In the other countries, where a parliamentary system has been retained, nevertheless the different parties govern on the basis of a "state of siege," the violent repression of the popular movements, the censorship of the press, etc. Without hesitation, we struggle and keep on struggling. It hasn't been the spirit of struggle that's been missing.... We, Latin American anarchists, don't pretend to bring a new infallible recipe to make the revolution. We simply want to contribute to the reclaiming of the revolutionary experience of the movement of the masses of our countries, "forgotten" and evaded by the politicians of all types, of both "left" and "right." The tumultuous demonstrations that inundated the streets of Buenos Aires, Montevideo and Sao Paulo, during the first decade of the century; the insurrectional



maintains a repressive apparatus capable of acting harshly in moments of crisis. [Reformist politics] have had their main development in times of political and economic tolerance by the bourgeoisie, moving in the space of a relative formal democracy, one of its more outstanding facets being the growth of the State sector.

(3) *Revolutionary positions*—defenders of the popular freedoms as alternatives to the formal democratic freedoms. These positions have been based on the development of the natural organs of the working class and of the people,... and they have been protagonists in the development of the violent forms [of struggle] against the State and capitalism.



### Bolivian miners' assembly

strikes that shook the cities and the fields, from Mexico to Chile; the energetic resistance of hundreds of thousands of workers to the exploitation and militarization of daily life; the rich trajectory of organizations, like the *Federacion Obrera Regional Argentina\**, of individuals, like Ricardo Flores Magon, of publications like *La Plebe* and *La Protesta*. About all this there exists an ominous silence, a silence that is not casual. All the ideologues and politicians interested in utilizing the masses as a trampoline to get themselves into power have been preoccupied in silencing this history, stating that anarchism is "outdated" or "petit-bourgeois." But freedom is neither outdated nor petit-bourgeois. Because of this, we, Latin American libertarians, continue fighting, here [Europe] as well as in Latin America, for a society where individuals and collectivities can take their destiny into their own hands, free of manipulation by any political elite; a society where the State would be replaced by the free federation of autonomous organizations; a society of self-management where, instead of five year plans fixed by a State bureaucracy, there would be [a society based on] the free agreement between the workers of the various branches of production; in other words, a society where individuals and collectivities would take into their own hands the management of all the different social activities

(health, housing, education, art, science, etc.) without delegating their power to bosses or to hierarchies of any type. The *cordones industriales* created by the Chilean people during the struggle [in the early 1970s], the Bolivian "popular assemblies" and the Argentinian *coordinadoras obreras* help to show us the road to follow."

*The Co-ordinadora Libertaria Latino-Americana* commits itself to:

- 1) —Solidarity in every way with the Latin American refugees in Europe, as well as with all the persecuted in Latin America.
- 2) —Backing to all anarchist movements that exist and are developing in Latin America, as well as to all social movements that develop in practice the autonomy of the masses and move in the direction of self-emancipation.
- 3) —Facilitating information and contacts, with the Latin American and international libertarian milieu.
- 4) —Publicizing anarchist ideas in the Latin American milieu near Paris and in other countries of the world.

—C.L.L.A.

Paris

November, 1980

\*Argentine Regional Workers Federation, backbone of the 1919 Argentine general strike, heart of the Argentine workers' movement before

the military *coup d'état* of 1931. Like the Spanish CNT, an anarcho-syndicalist union with a libertarian communist program. Hundreds of thousands of members in the post-World War I period, though estimates vary on the exact number. Not interested in building a stable bureaucratic machine, "membership" was often loose, dues-paying not a rigid requirement. If you participated, you were a "member." No paid officials. In the mid-1920s a reformist-moving section of the FORA, based on the strong FOM (Maritime Workers Federation) left and joined with the more apolitical Railway Union to become the basis of the CGT—whose developing bureaucracy later provided a base for Peron's authoritarian populism during the post-war boom years (1940s-50s).

### Scab gets pie in the eye

SAULT STE. MARIE (CP)—A strike at Huron Broadcasting Ltd. turned messy when a union member who crossed the picket line was hit by custard pies. The employee received the uncomplimentary pies when he tried to leave a city station after work.

—Toronto Globe and Mail

# ¿Quién Salvará El Salvador?

## Who Will Save The Savior?

**Editors' Note:** The following article, which was written prior to the recent March 27 demonstrations against US intervention in El Salvador, is reprinted from *Midnight Notes*. Their address is: *Midnight Notes, Box 204, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130*. One copy: \$1.50, subscriptions (four issues) \$4.00.

This spring, CISPES and other groups will be calling another series of demonstrations. They will be the nth, the n+1st, demos on El Salvador in addition to the hundreds of rallies held throughout last year all over the U.S. Once again, as on May 3rd 1981, people will congregate from every part of the country, spend (collectively) millions of dollars, nights of sleep, marched, long hours of bus shock, to participate in an event which, as last year's experience has taught us, will have at best a purely *symbolic* effect. Haven't we learned yet? Demonstrations in Washington will not stop the U.S. build up and intervention in El Salvador.

It is certainly nice to get together with people all over the country, exchange news about what's happening back home, take some literature that will come in handy at seminars, teach-ins, etc. Most important, excuse the irony, it's nice to have the feeling you are *doing something*. But are we really? Take last year: thousands of people poured into Washington, millions of words and slogans were written, screamed and chanted, most often reaching ears already con-

vinced—and yet what did we gain except feeling good that we are doing something?

The state hawks clearly were not very impressed by our effort; their main response was to escalate the war. Meanwhile, in El Salvador twenty thousand people were butchered. In fact, one had the experience of total schizophrenia. One day you march with your placard: "Imperialism won't pass," "La lucha continua," etc. Next, you read in the paper about the massacre of hundreds of Salvadoran refugees in Honduras, the mutilations and tortures, as if the war and our demonstrations each went their own way: Americans marching to Washington, Salvadorans dying, we march, they die, march and die. Even in the battle to prevent deportations we have failed to reach any success.

Is this simply because the US state and capital are "too strong" or is it the case that there is something wrong, badly insufficient, almost non-serious, with our strategies and tactics? Why in fact should the State Department worry about all our marches on Washington on Saturdays and Sundays when nobody is there and we couldn't disturb the hair on one dead-bureaucrat's head?

They are so confident in our ineffectuality they don't even send the police openly any longer (see May 3rd) to keep us in line. Indeed, they can only be happy that we channel our frustration and potential explosiveness in such innocent and innocuous ways—we engage in "celebra-

tions of solidarity," but not in occasions to discuss what this would mean in practice. They must be happy indeed that we spend our energies and our money—our precious and decreasing movement resources—to hear repeated (many times) from a podium the same facts and ideas that got us going in the first place (plus the invariable Pete Seeger). What a perfect method of *neutralization*. They would, however, be very upset if instead of Washington we marched on week days in the shipyards and airports where the helicopters leave for El Salvador, or on the factories where they are built.

**A**s we all know, American intervention in El Salvador is not made of words and ideas but is a very *material process*, made of guns, rockets, bombs, jets, gunships, welders, assembly lines, trucks, ships, air freight haulers, CIA and military advisors and, possibly soon, *even us as draftees*. Why then demonstrate in Washington and not in the factories, shipyards, airports and recruitment stations where the helicopter gun ships are built, shipped, assembled, packed and manned? So why go to a dead city on Sunday and not on Monday to talk to workers that are doing the producing, packing and shipping?

We learned from the 60s that it was not our words that troubled the Pentagon. If the anti-war movement had success in disrupting US involvement in Viet Nam this is because we did much more than simply march on Washington to inform the country of our moral outrage. We burnt draft



cards, occupied ROTC buildings, left the country for Europe and Canada instead of being inducted for Nam duty. We never took the "winter palace," but our actions were a continuous nuisance, a continuous material drain for Pentagon and Co. By forcing continuous breaks, preventing the wheel from grinding on, we were an inspiration to people all over the world.

Today the success and the impact of the European anti-war movement on even the US warmongers is based on the same process. For example, recently the movement physically blocked attempts by the US to widen and lengthen an airfield in Germany in order to make it ready to receive the new missiles they are planning to base there in 1983. The movement was able to draw in many people who saw in this a concrete act against the war planning and draw the connection between general nuclear death and the daily death people around the airport suffer from: the pollution, jet noise, shrinking space.

But why can't we do the same now? Why not investigate what are the *material links*, the bridges of repression between the US and El Salvador, where we can direct our action, marches and intervention? Why can't we find out where the helicopters are built and shipped, how we can prevent it, how we can involve the workers who are doing it? Can't we make everyone confront the fact that they are participating in murder? Trouble their sleep? Put on the map these isolated and "innocent" towns where the weapons are built, say their roles and show them to be American Auschwitz's? Harbor refugees and prevent them from being deported and block the airplanes that attempt to take them back. This is not marching in Washington "on a Sunday afternoon," but it is what will help the Salvadoran people avoid an American slaughter. By failing to practice these sorts of actions, not only will our demos be ineffective and wasted (dissipating our energies for nothing), but we won't be able to avoid being accomplices, by virtue of our passivity and lack of action, when faced with a slaughter.

We know that we are not alone in feeling that we cannot repeat the

same thing as last spring, and that current tactics lead us nowhere. *The stakes are getting higher and higher.* As Haig, Weinberger and Reagan have made it clear: this is a question of life and death, there is no return for anybody in this war. Not for the US state which is testing here its ability to control and exploit Latin America and further its ability to suppress any dissent at home: not for the Salvadoran people for whom the only alternative is either victory or genocide, and not for us, who if we accept Salvador will accept everything. *We too are being tested in El Salvador.* For the government knows that if we accept this, we are ready to accept even a nuclear war.

It is time then to move not just with our feet, in yet another march but move *politically* by finding the *raw nerves* of the apparatus of repression and transferring our activity directly on them. *If the problem is in Tulsa, act in Tulsa, not in New York in front of the UN.* "Acting in Tulsa" means the following:

- Find out the unions that are involved in building and shipping the arms to El Salvador—go to meetings.
- Talk to the women in these areas, show them the pictures, the facts, and not just on the campuses.
- Name the plants and shipping points with graffiti, stickers, etc.
- Put obstacles in the flow of production and transport.
- Make the connection between accepting death as a way to make a living, accepting to become a murderer in exchange for a wage, pay the rent with the blood of people who haven't done anything to you and accepting a job that you know



will kill you and may even kill your children as well.

- Bring the attention of the media to the towns that are now living on the death of the Salvadoran people, bring Salvadorans to these places and talk to the workers, and ask them not to butcher their kids, etc.

This is by no means a complete list, but it is only down this path, which is no guarantee of victory, that a real possibility lies. Continuing the old path is a guarantee of defeat. □

## Jobs! Where are those jobs?

LOS ANGELES—Officials at Boys Market say they're changing their application procedures after 2,000 people turned out to apply for 30 to 40 jobs at a new store opening in a high-unemployment neighborhood. "It was a shock," said spokesman Sam Miller. He said four store employees sent to interview applicants Thursday were so intimidated by the throngs that they left. The applicants were responding to flyers distributed in the neighborhood, saying about 30

to 40 jobs would be available next month.

—San Francisco Examiner

## Alabama unemployment higher than in 1930s

Unemployment in Alabama reached a record high in January at 14.7% of the workforce, breaking a record set in the depths of the Great Depression. Some 245,000 Alabama workers were without jobs and actively seeking work. Nationwide unemployment was 9.4%.

—Racine Labor (6/4/82)

By Mike Harris,  
Libertarian Workers Group

In this article I want to begin a discussion of my activities in District 65-UAW. This contribution is based solely on my own experiences and doesn't reflect the other activities of the Libertarian Workers Group in various workplaces or unions. In future contributions the LWG hopes to summarize our other activities and we encourage others to do the same. I hope that we can all learn from each other's successes and failures and therefore see this contribution as the beginning of a fruitful discussion that would eventually lead to a more

workers. I should add that 65 was also affiliated with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union but later left that union due to raiding and RWDSU's support for the Viet Nam War.

Politically 65 is considered "progressive," with a history of Left and CP influence, though today's leadership is social democratic (the DSOC brand of social democracy). We are unfamiliar with any anarchist activity that may have occurred in the past.

65 has generally stood on the side of social justice and peace even when these stands have not been popular throughout the labor movement.

membership should've been educated and mobilized but weren't. Not that it's important for a leadership to initiate—the point is that 65 isn't based on rank-and-file self-mobilization.

On the bureaucratic level 65 endorsed last year's anti-nuke march on Harrisburg, but there were no notices put up in the shops. Nor has there been discussion on nuclear power or nuclear war at our local

## Anarchist Shop Experiences



coherent strategy of making anarchism a viable part of the contemporary workers' movement.

Before I begin my case by case discussion it's important to give a run down on District 65. District 65-UAW is a small union (38,000, including 7,000 retirees—official estimate), with a majority of the membership located in the New York City metropolitan area. District 65 was first organized by militant dry goods workers in 1933 on New York City's predominantly Jewish lower east side. At that time, and for nearly the next 20 years, the union (independent until it became District 65 of the Textile Workers Organizing Committee, which it later left) organized warehouse and store workers in the dry goods, textile, garment, millinery and button industries. Since then District 65 has gone on to organize workers in printing and publishing, education, office, cosmetics, corrugated, shoe, insurance, legal services and a host of other industries and services. On the average, 65 shops number between five and 20 workers. Most shops in the founding locals average one to ten

However, it's important to recognize the limitations of these paper positions. More often than not the union's position was developed and acted upon simply by the top leadership, with little discussion or education within the ranks.

Secondly, the solutions that have been offered mirror the general social-democratic solutions on war, peace and social justice. Rather than questioning capitalism as a whole, the leadership—who ultimately approves all political stands—focuses in on either particular situations—or on particular politicians, such as Reagan. Therefore the question of multi-racial working class power and equality is really skirted and the fights that the union wages are for mere reforms within the system.

Even on the working class issues that it does take up, the bureaucracy does little to educate or mobilize the membership. Time after time the union has endorsed events where the

meetings. The same holds true for the events in El Salvador—even though 65 has a position against U.S. intervention. It simply is not enough to develop anti-nuke, anti-racist and anti-militarist positions from the top. A million and one "progressive" or "radical" positions can be developed; however there's little substance if they are simply discussed and decided upon in a bureaucratic fashion.

Also, reformist and pre-fab solutions are guaranteed if they come from the top. Not that the rank-and-file might not come up with similar solutions, but at least there should be discussion within the ranks as the solutions and proposals for action should come from below, not from above. And be carried out in a decentralized way. As working class history has shown, there can be no revolutionary workers' movement if it takes on a social-democratic form. It's only when—at first—militant and revolutionary minorities, who are organically linked to the base, argue their positions and do the proper educational and organizing work that there are movements from below—the sort of movements that are capable of developing their own political positions and organizational forms. Therefore it's important that we begin to act in such a fashion as to ensure the proper education and autonomy of our class.

The question then arises: how do we relate to this situation—of bu-

reocratic union "progressivism"—as anarcho-syndicalists? It's true that the union's progressive stands are bureaucratically decided upon and the solutions arrived at are reformist, and that these paper positions act as a substitute for militant action.

Nonetheless, this situation does provide us a certain latitude for providing revolutionary alternatives to the official union positions. And an organizational arena where we can concentrate to develop our perspectives and present them to a larger audience.

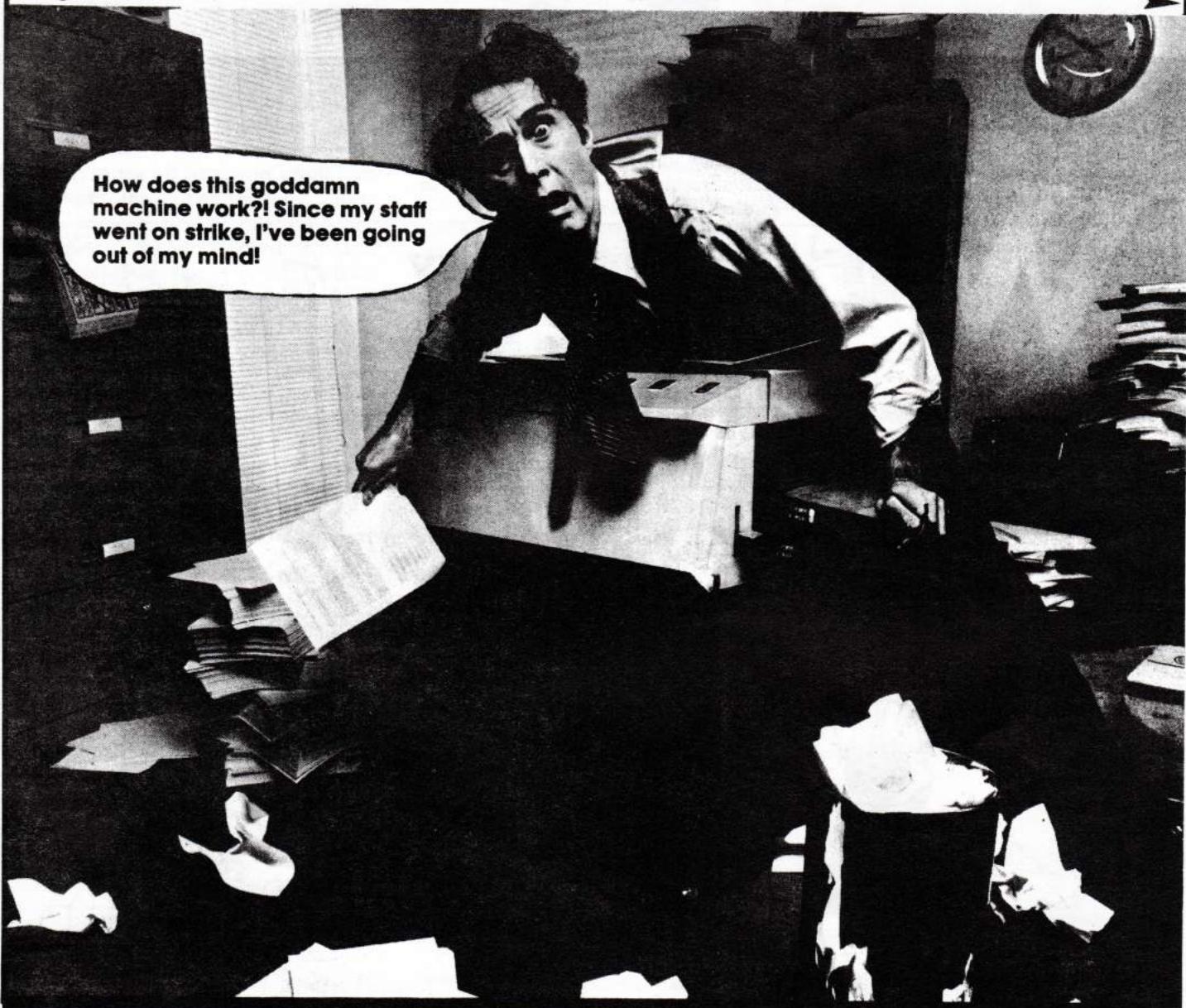
Let's face it, anyone who's been active in the shop knows that revolutionaries are confronted with lots of problems. If the bureaucracy wants to lighten the load, that's fine. In

turn it's our responsibility as revolutionaries to go beyond the reformist solutions posed by the bureaucracy.

When the bureaucracy agrees to support, let's say, the peace movement, we must in turn discuss among the membership how such decisions were reached. Why was it decided from above? Why is there no discussion? Why is there no education? And why are decisions always made without input from the ranks, particularly in a so-called "rank-and-file union" like 65. What we need to do, in these situations, is to go beyond what is officially presented and to agitate around our own positions for both rank and file control of the union and revolutionary alternatives.

## Not Genuine Democracy

District 65 has in the past relied on direct action and rank-and-file organizing committees for organizing efforts. However, over the years this has fallen to the wayside, though the leadership would have us believe otherwise. It has been my experience that when rank-and-filers attempt to organize unorganized workers on their own, the bureaucracy deters rank-and-file activity through various bureaucratic methods; primarily by placing limits on rank-and-file control of the campaign and by imposing "responsible" business union tactics. The bureaucracy is very uncreative in this regards, though there are exceptions.



As I've previously mentioned, the bureaucracy likes to boast that 65 is a rank-and-file union. It may be true that 65 is democratic in comparison to the labor movement as a whole, but it is worlds apart from the anarcho-syndicalist concept of rank-and-file unionism.

Since 1980 the union has undertaken a plan to decentralize its rather top-heavy structure. Since that time organizers have been "freed" to concentrate on organizing—as opposed to servicing and administrative assistance of locals—and local officers have been given further immediate administrative responsibilities. To "further enhance the rank-and-file character" (*Distributive Worker* 12/80) of the union, rank-and-filers are now given the opportunity to serve on any one of a dozen or so committees which pertain to the maintenance of the union.

On the surface this looks fine and dandy. However the question arises as to why—after all these years of bureaucratization—did the leadership decide to decentralize such functions? My observations—and conversations with members of various locals—lead me to believe that:

A) staff members—particularly organizers and "unlimited home" staffers—became so over-burdened that there was little effective administration on the local level;

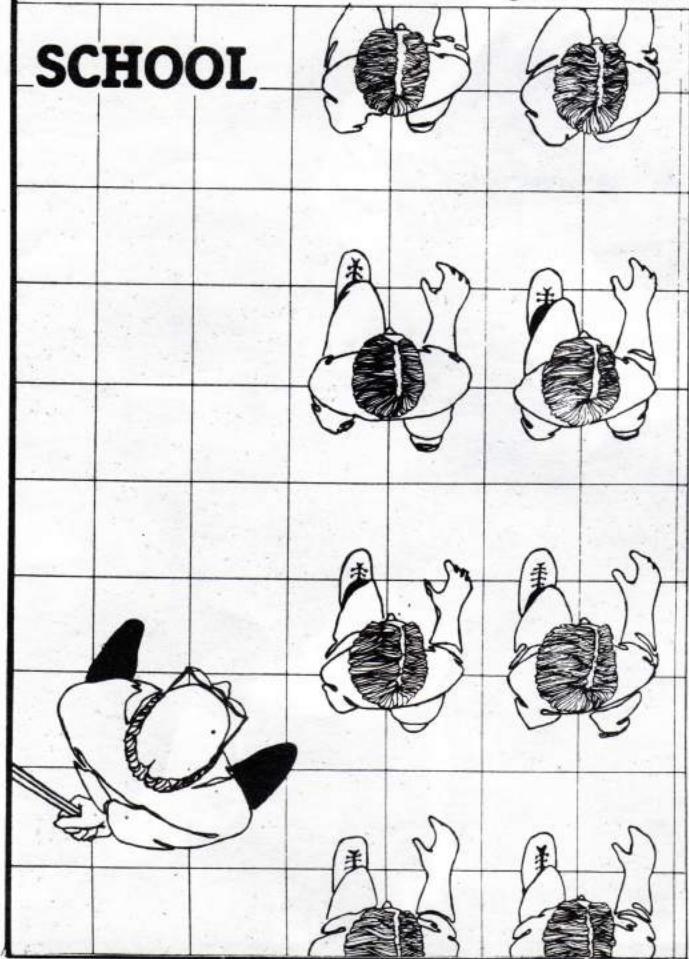
B) cost-cutting was another rationale (the leadership gave themselves a 26% raise despite the financial insecurity of the union);

C) also the rank-and-file was becoming restless with the over-bureaucratization and the failure of the bureaucracy to meet the membership's needs. Therefore, in order to pre-empt any sort of rank-and-file self-activity (caucuses, rap groups, newsletters or what have you) the leadership decided to decentralize the functions of the union, but, naturally, not the decision-making powers.

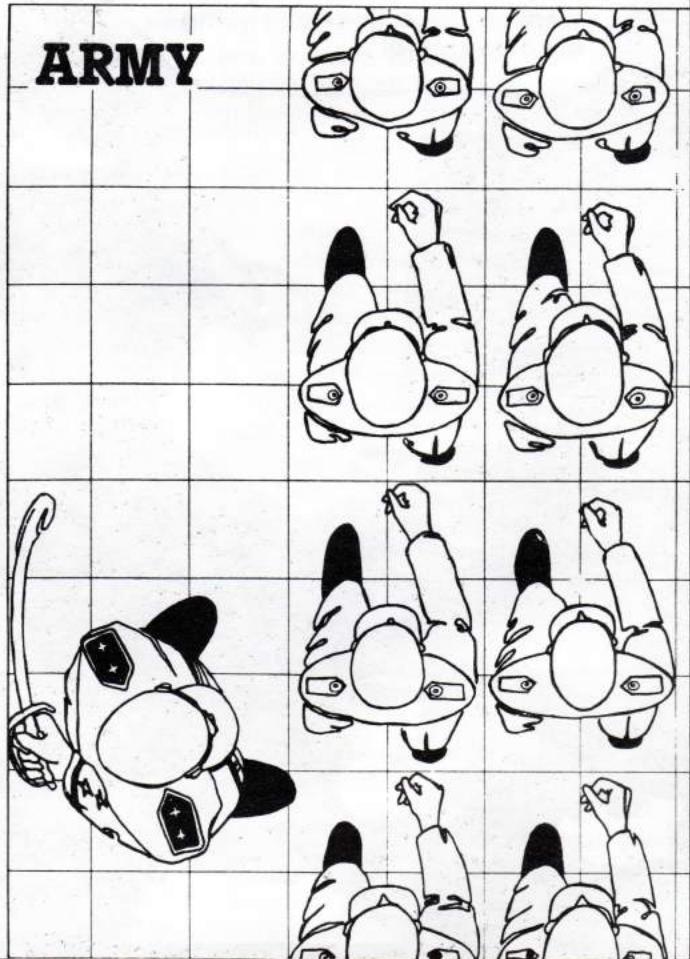
Democracy, in my viewpoint, includes the way that issues are presented, how they are voted on and discussed, and the right to raise "unpopular" issues and the right to organize and fight for what one thinks without being persecuted. The issue of power is basic. In other words, who actually controls the decision-making process and the organization itself.

In truth, in 65, rank-and-file democracy exists in words only. As I've noted, rank-and-filers presently take care of many of the day-to-day union affairs. However, nearly all long term decisions are decided upon by the President, Secretary-Treasurer, Vice-Presidents or elected administrator. Real rank-and-file democracy is curtailed by the union's governing structure. And in the way criticisms are handled by the leadership. Before I develop my case, let me stop a minute and describe the bodies of the union. The base unit is the shop or office. In turn these are integrated with a local. Each local has an executive board composed of stewards and local officers. In the recent past there have been few challenges to the local leadership in the needle trades locals. On this level rank-and-file impact is curbed—as per the constitution—by giving "the responsibility for the execution of a program for the local, for the organizing of unorganized workers...for enforcement of...contracts..." to the local executive board and not the membership. While I would argue that there needs to be some co-ordinating body for each local, important

## SCHOOL



## ARMY



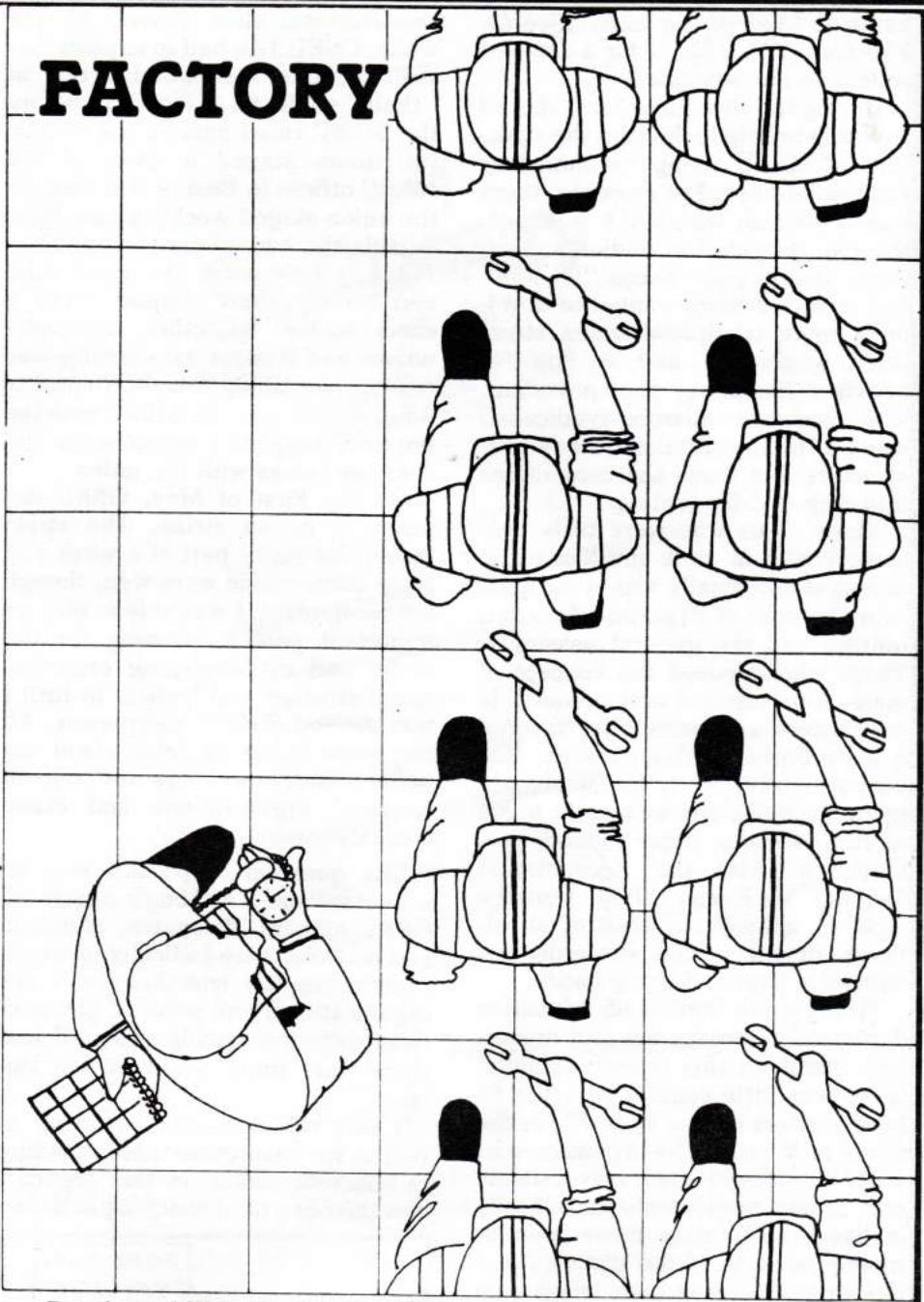
local proposals, which should be decided on by the membership, at present usually come from the top leadership with little debate in the local. It's disheartening to see most proposals rubber stamped by both the stewards and membership. Because discussion is muted and decisions are predetermined by the leadership, 65ers get discouraged and fall into the "follow-the-leader" syndrome.

The next governing body—and supposedly the supreme body—is the general council. The G.C. is composed of all local executive boards and officers of 65. Generally speaking, active rank-and-filers are allowed to sit in on general council sessions but are discouraged if they are not liked by sections of the leadership. It is on this level that the leadership attempts to have its proposals rubber stamped. However, I have seen the leadership taken on on several occasions. A recent case involved ten organizers, supposedly fired for being ineffective. The real issue was the right of organizers to speak their minds freely, the question of who determines tactics, and the fact that they were overworked and underpaid. The general council supported the fired organizers.

Anyway, as we climb the hierarchical ladder, we reach the real power source, the Executive Committee. The E.C. is composed of all top executive officers of the union. While it is supposed to be the case—according to the constitution—that the E.C.'s "actions and decisions" [are] "subject to the review and approval of the general council," the simple fact remains that the E.C. decides policy and is really the holder of power. Ostensibly there are democratic means to contest the decisions of the Executive Committee but little is really challenged, because of the top-heavy structure, manipulation on all levels and the "it-must-have-gotten-lost-in-the-mail" syndrome.

It would be mistaken to totally lay the blame on the leadership for this situation. While they're clearly pulling the strings, there's virtually no organized and autonomous rank and file movement to challenge the bureaucracy. The CP has, I believe, a fraction or two but they're usually uncritical of the national leadership and I would hardly call them allies in any LWG activities in 65.

# FACTORY



Based on LWG observations (two LWGers are members of District 65), we perceive that there is enough dissatisfaction in 65 over low wage settlements, poor enforcement of contract rights, bureaucratic manipulation—behind the facade of democracy and militant rhetoric, that it provides an opportunity for us to agitate, discuss and hopefully, pull together militant 65ers into an independent grouping. At present the form this grouping will take on is undefined. We are of the opinion that any grouping that emerges should be non-sectarian and open to all militant 65ers who see the need for real rank and file democracy and control of the union—based on rank and file com-

mittees, and who are class-conscious. This perspective has been the basis of our workplace and union activities.

## GSEU: Centralism vs. Decentralization

Over the years I have worked in several areas in which 65 is organized or was attempting to organize. In the latter case I have played a critical role in two organizing drives. At the University of Massachusetts I was active in trying to organize and build the Graduate Student Employees Union, which at the time (1979) was affiliated with District 65. Prior to my departure from the university I was elected Or-

ganizing Chair of the union. (See *On The Line*, Vol. 2 No. 4 for a detailed article on our struggle.)

During the short time I was there I was able to help to develop the structure of GSEU along revolutionary syndicalist lines. For example, there was a division within the union on the role that elected bodies and officers should play. Some "leaders" and rank-and-filers wanted to develop a more traditional union structure, whereas I and a core of activists (including the president, who was an anarcho-syndicalist) wanted to decentralize the power structure and make the committees into rank-and-file bodies.

Those of us who were truly concerned with a rank-and-file union mounted and finally won a struggle over the role of departmental committees and the general assembly. Those who opposed the concept of mass departmental and union-wide committees and assemblies favored a more bureaucratic approach; that is, only elected—or, for some, appointed—delegates to handle union affairs, without departmental participation. Also the "decentralist faction," as it was called, won the right of immediate recall of all officers, delegates and stewards, not without a long and tiring battle.

How did the District 65 Education department bureaucracy and organizers stand on this issue? Actually, there was little contact with the 65 headquarters in New York City or the office in Boston. The organizer who was "in charge" had very little to say, in part because she is radically inclined, and rarely came around, mainly because of the distance and the strike that was then being conducted at Boston University.

The tactics employed by GSEU were a combination of traditional union tactics and direct action, with an emphasis on the latter. GSEU sought to use more traditional tactics only in regards to filing for a Massachusetts Labor Relations Commission election, and then only because the university wouldn't bargain with the union. Ultimately the MLRC ruled that teaching assistants and research associates could not be considered employees—even though we sold our labor power—but rather, students with extracurricular responsibilities.

In the area of tactics I consistently argued in favor of direct action and

departmental slow downs. All the while, GSEU TAs had to explain that their actions weren't directed at "their" students. A few days before the MLRC ruled against the GSEU, the union staged a sit-in at the MLRC offices in Boston. On campus the union staged weekly picket lines outside the administration building. Publicity was good, the lines solid and militant and support from a cross section of other university unions and student associations was strong. The GSEU was determined to win even though the MLRC and the university wouldn't recognize or discuss the issues with the union.

On the First of May, GSEU decided to go on strike. The strike lasted the better part of a week and some concessions were won, though not recognition. I was able to play an important part in pushing for the strike and in developing organizational strategy and tactics. In turn I was elected Strike Chairperson. All the while being up front about my politics and how I saw the role of workers' organizations and class-consciousness.

The question of politics was an important one. Although nearly all GSEU officers, delegates, stewards and activists were radically inclined, there were few anarchists and our organizational and political perspectives were not readily accepted and there were times when we felt isolated.

I saw the necessity of trying to realize my theoretical understanding in concrete action. In this regard I saw the need for developing self-con-

fidence in my co-workers, as well as helping to fight for a decentralized, militant and rank-and-file-controlled organization. I placed a lot of emphasis on self-confidence and self-organization and tried to point out how the class struggle has to be fought on our terms and not the bosses' or the state's. I also tried to point out the dangers of union professionalism and leftist manipulation. And to a degree I was successful.

In this situation a minoritarian idea and group of activists were able to lay the foundation, through long and hard work, for a syndicalist union. Although the ultimate goals—raising class-consciousness, linking up with other union militants (on and off campus) and a general offensive against the state—were not always clear, there was a limited degree of success in laying the foundation for future work.

Due to unfortunate circumstances I had to leave the university. However, in the short time I was there I was able to gain the respect of my co-workers as both a militant and revolutionary syndicalist. I was also able to prove that the key to fighting the boss was through our own self-activity and rank-and-file control of the union and of our struggles. While this was a good lesson, the end results proved to be less fruitful. Since 1979 contacts have been lost, the GSEU barely exists and no new people were directly brought into the anarcho-syndicalist movement.

### Organize into existing unions?

It is the LWG's opinion that initiating and/or participating in organizing campaigns serves several purposes. For example, when I was working in a large unorganized warehouse I attempted to get an organizing campaign going. I was aware of the inherent problems of organizing into a *trade* union, but also viewed such activity as part of our overall shopfloor activities. We believe, unlike IWW and council communist purists, that unions are the basic defensive organisms of our class. We don't believe that there can only be sporadic class organization as some councilists feel, nor that the only union for our class is the IWW. The development of revolutionary ideas, mass action and independent organization takes time to



develop and during that time workers need to make basic economic gains and need to defend those gains from the bosses. Also, in organizing campaigns we are able to establish ourselves as militants and therefore be able to reach those workers we might not be otherwise able to reach.

And as an anarcho-syndicalist I've always attempted to organize around issues that went beyond pure and simple unionism. For instance, using the example of the Polish movement, I attempted to raise the question of management "rights" and who really controls society's wealth. On this score there was always an open ear since the Polish events were always in the press. Based on the inherently revolutionary content of the Polish events, I attempted to discuss with my co-workers what a union—in particular, a revolutionary union—should be like, what organizational forms it should develop and how does this organization meet the needs of workers not only in the shop, but beyond the walls of the shop as well.

The Polish events were of equal value to any agitational piece that I could've distributed. Early Solidarity provided an example of a working class in motion, one that was self-directed. And one that provided a living example of what a working class organization could and should be.

In retrospect I would still defend my decision to help organize my co-workers into 65. Some comrades in the movement may see this sort of organizing as inherently reformist or say that it reinforces the hold of union bureaucracy over a potentially militant working class. Or they may feel that this type of organizing is no different from what other leftists—from social democrats to Marxist-Leninists—do. And that the total sum of our activities should be to develop revolutionary committees or revolutionary unions from scratch.

There's a certain element of truth in the above points of view. Yet, in my mind, the question still remains—what do you do in real situations when little apparent class consciousness exists, when you're an isolated revolutionary, when the working class as a whole is on the defensive and when the wages and benefits are pitifully low? Or, are we to sit back and allow ourselves and our ideas to remain isolated? Are we



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to say to someone who has never been in a union, that all unions are simply reformist and bureaucratic, so don't join them, join a revolutionary union that could promise you the world but offer little for the time being? This is the problem with the IWW and has been for years.

Secondly, based on the realities of today, an isolated revolutionary union would, I believe, be forced to become more or less as reformist a union as 65. Sure, a revolutionary workers organization, one that would be democratic and militant with visions of workers self-management

would be far better than anything that exists today. But let's face it, without years of persistent agitation and propaganda and greater levels of working class resistance no such revolutionary organization will come about.

It is with this understanding that I've attempted to develop the needed base to agitate for the principles and goals anarcho-syndicalism stands for. Each step forward that our class takes—and I believe that union organizing is a step forward, small as it is—provides us with new lessons and

experiences to be assimilated. I mean workers as a whole, not just the class conscious elements.

We, as class conscious workers, know the various pitfalls of unionism and from that basis we agitate and organize towards those goals we believe in. If our class doesn't move as fast or in the same direction that shouldn't preclude us from being pragmatic and help to develop new tactics. That's not to say we can't be thought-provoking or take positions or actions that are "ahead" of our co-workers. After all, debate and discussion is what we're striving for in our shop work and within the workers' movement. It's out of these discussions and activities that our ideas are accepted or rejected. It can only be from discussion within the class that workers will come to view themselves as a class and develop new ideas and activities. But in an unorganized situation the bottom line is starting with some basics even at the risk of seeming like a "reformist."

In my situation in the unorganized warehouse, the need for a union shop was to be the central theme in the opening stages. From that starting point I attempted to educate my co-workers on the fact that unions can be more than bargaining agents. Although I wasn't able to carry out all the ideas I had I did attempt to develop an embryonic organizing committee and—I hoped the local—along syndicalist lines. In many respects my activities were similar to the work I did in GSEU.

I believed that such a development would be possible since, unlike other 65 shops, there were 400 workers in the shop and they would constitute an autonomous local. Autonomous locals are rare in 65 and therefore, if the proper groundwork is laid, harder for the bureaucrats to control.

I note this for several reasons, not purely out of excessive optimism. The majority of my co-workers were women. They are either young or middle aged, though conservatism on some issues was present, there is a strong unconscious feminism that exists. I saw this manifested many times in relations with supervisors and male co-workers, all of whom were incredibly sexist. Through small tokens of resistance to sexism, hierarchy and the general power structure, a sense of autonomy was



"Miss Reed, your union contract says you must give thirty days notice before you strike."

observable, thus implying that some of the workers saw the need to control their own situations and, I would hope, their own organization.

While classconsciousness was uneven, job actions did occur, never large ones and never connected to larger struggles nor a recognition that they were part of a broader struggle of our class. Yet there was a certain sense of militancy. Militancy that could've been connected and put to effect over the long haul, but hadn't been, partly because of inexperience, fear and years of sexist conditioning, conditioning that teaches women to be passive.

I also found that we become what the Spanish comrades called "influential militants." There is no contradiction in being an anarchist and having influence, as long as one doesn't lose touch with basic anarchist principles. In most cases such a role is thrust upon us. We aren't vanguardists in the sense of seeking power. We should, however, see the need to help influence events and consciousness in a more libertarian manner. Being a trusted and respected person is important and a clear recognition that there is an acceptance or tolerance of some of our ideas and that we are catalysts in developing struggles.

While it is true that union organization is a form of self-organization, there are problems with this, particularly from an anarchist perspective. In this situation, as well as others, most of the workers viewed the organizer and "influential militants" as the experts, those who

would win the struggle for a union shop and contract, not themselves. There was a mentality of "looking up to others," a mentality that is understandable in a top-down society, but unacceptable nonetheless. In this regard I tried to point out the real power of working class self-organization and self-activity, based on our own shop experiences, personal relationships and the way we view unions and political structures.

### Newsletters and Action Committees

In the years 1979-80 the LWG saw an opening for group activity in the printing and publishing trades. Two members of the LWG were working in this area (I was working in a book warehouse) and had a number of contacts and were seriously discussing the idea of issuing a newsletter called "Hot Type." As a group, we viewed activities in the printing and publishing trades as a way of making contact with other working class militants. It would have been through the medium of "Hot Type" that the LWG would raise political issues and relate them to our respective unions and workplaces, as well as being a means to developing autonomous organizations within our respective unions. We saw the creation of such a newsletter as an extension of our effort to present a class analysis and propagate anarcho-syndicalist ideas. Although the project was still-born, it's important to note that the LWG has always viewed individual shop activities as connected to a broader picture. We hope to develop decentralized and autonomous organizations which would be forums for debate, discussion and action within the working class. It is through these organizations and newsletters that we hope to reach workers in areas where we have an organic link. It's important for us to always broaden our contacts with others in the same industry, craft or profession and thus develop networks of militants.

I was ultimately fired from the book warehouse—on a trumped up excuse. I should also mention that the union didn't back me up, even when I received a death threat. However, my support in the shop was strong enough that there were several job actions after my firing and a general slowdown. It's important to have strong ties with your co-workers and

also a support network *independent* of the union. Ultimately, any power and unity must come from this and not from the union bureaucracy.

In this regard I might mention that I have made some lasting friendships and I'm still in touch with what is happening inside the shop. Immediately after being fired from ERS I went to work in a 65 shop across the highway. (The details of shop life and the problems we had with the union are described in the September 1981 issue of *On The Line*.) In this new job I was able to play a valuable role in pulling together the seething anger that some of the workers had against the boss and class collaborationist steward. While distributing union materials and informing people of their basic rights as union members, I also attempted to use examples to show how 65 wasn't really a rank-and-file union.

For example: the fact that when it came time for negotiations, the steward and the union representative would sit down with the boss and negotiate an agreement without any input from the workers. This sort of discussion would in turn lead into discussions on shop democracy and how important it is for the membership to actively insist on being part of the decision-making process and the need for the rank and file to be independently organized to fight on issues that affect them.

Meanwhile, I also kept my friends across the highway posted on the troubles at Folsom and attempted to point out the dangers when workers are not vigilant and don't control their own organization—and the need for autonomy and rank and file organization.

Unfortunately, I was too open and too militant too fast and was fired before making seniority. Thus a lesson was learned—we have to be patient and view shop work as a long process, not just posturing as a supermilitant.

Presently I'm employed in a textile warehouse. My shop is not a typical shop in District 65's New York Textile Local. The shop has a long history of rank-and-file militancy and there is a high proportion of active union members.

In the year that I've been in the shop I have become noted for my honesty and sincerity as an individual and as a militant. And because of this I have been approached to run

for shop steward. There are four significant aspects of this situation. For openers, I am relatively new in the shop—most workers have been in the shop for five years or more. Secondly, the shop is composed mostly of American black, Haitian and Hispanic workers. Thirdly, I am known as a "socialist" and a militant who will confront the boss and the union at every twist and turn on the issues that most affect my co-workers and our local. Fourthly, I'm a union activist, one who never misses a local meeting, a General Council or Textile Local Executive Board meeting. One who freely speaks his mind and one who goes out on his lunch hour to try to organize competing shops or the unorganized shops in our building.

All of these factors are important for long term work in the shop and local. In this case what we can see is the actual reality of multi-racial unity, a key question in any struggle in the New York metropolitan area. We also see that it is possible to be open about your politics. Of course, not all shops are the same, but we do think it is possible to be politically up-front—unlike such groups as the International Socialists—and still be respected when co-workers have fundamental political disagreements with you.

A number of issues have provided an opening for discussing politics from an anarcho-syndicalist perspective—the plight of the Haitian refugees in the U.S., my support for the Haitian revolutionary struggle, the events in El Salvador and Poland, and the PATCO strike. In turn, I am well-liked by my Haitian co-workers, who are my strongest supporters for shop steward. My involvement in this situation can only help the LWG's work with the Haitian Workers' Association.

I might note that I distribute *On The Line, Strike!* and LWG leaflets to some of my co-workers (as well as to some workers in other shops in the building). In this regard it is important for the LWG to develop a more frequent press and for the movement in general to develop more shop oriented newsletters. In my case a shop newsletter would be premature since information flows pretty well. What will be needed in the months ahead is a rank-and-file industry-wide newsletter that will devel-

op the kind of contacts Textile Local (and for that matter, all 65 needle trades locals) membership will need in the upcoming contract negotiations and the period beyond.

### Run for steward?

The question of whether anarchists should run for steward is a sticky one. I believe that one must weigh the pros and cons before deciding whether to run or not. Some questions in my mind are: 1) As steward, is it possible to maintain one's pol-

## Off on that same rampage again

Hey grandma,  
Why the sorry face?  
I am doomed we are  
doomed to Capitalism.  
It is the face we wear  
without being able to  
reach through the monetary  
exchange. Blast  
the monetary exchange.  
Trust the trusts  
to hell.  
Doddamn the hell-bent ledgers.  
Let the round sum roll its  
way out of here.  
Le the ass-ets forever settle  
never to move again toward profit.  
Goddamn the material gain.  
Goddamn the windows  
out of which the chained  
receptionist gazes out.  
The punch cards.  
The offices.  
I hate them all.  
For not hating.

Hey my anger is  
impotent. Shall I  
cause a riot with my lone fists?  
Shall I rise up/rising alone?  
Shall I try to break into some  
solitary house of correction?  
Can I free the prisoners  
alone? Can I go off to  
fight the revolution  
with a lone plane ticket?  
Work at my job till  
my hands are raw  
and mind is whirling  
with dreams?

Grandma,  
why are the wise men  
wise?

—Sally Frye

itical identity and independence as well as being associated with the union? 2) Would one be forced to act as the enforcer for union policies or agreements with an employer even when you personally disagree with them? 3) How militant can one be in the shop without risking the loss of support? 4) What political activities can be taken as a steward? Can the steward's position be used to do more "advanced" political work in the local and industry? 5) How does this change one's relationship with co-workers?

Though I feel these questions need to be addressed, I think that we, as anarchists in the workplace, need to address them collectively. There can be no *one* answer to the question of running for steward because of the variety in shop conditions and union structures. I believe that each situation presents us with different objective and subjective problems. The question that we can all address is—what can we effectively do to present our ideas and develop militant action and organizational forms to reach libertarian goals?

In my present situation I believe that it's tactically alright to run for steward. The present steward is not trusted and is politically conservative. The present shop committee—all shop committee members are appointed by the steward—hardly func-

tions as a militant and representative committee of the shop. And the steward refuses to take militant actions when the need arises. Also, he rarely holds shop meetings.

In my own case, I'm a person my co-workers have confidence in—I was approached some months ago by the most militant and class-conscious workers in the shop about running for steward—I'm in tune with the needs of the shop and a fighter for our class as well. Since I'm already known as a "socialist" my co-workers know where I stand politically and realize that my politics—whether they agree with them or not—will guide my conduct as steward and shop representative on the Textile Executive Board and General Council. It is from my militant stands on shop and political issues that I've been able to develop a solid base of support. And support is a cornerstone of all aspects of our shop and union activities. It's from this basis that I know that I'll generally be supported when I confront the boss and the union on issues that face the shop, the local or general membership.

As an anarcho-syndicalist I believe in the sovereignty of the rank and file, so it will be known from the beginning that if a majority of the shop disapproves of me as steward, they can call for me to step down. Secondly, I plan on calling for

an open election for shop committee members and plan on holding monthly shop meetings. I view these shop meetings as the decision making body for any and all policies and tactics that we develop. I personally view these proposals as ways of developing direct democracy and an arena where political and shop ideas and events can be analysed and discussed.

Within the local and union I will have access to a lot more information than I now have. And the steward's position provides me with a forum to present my ideas. Let's face it, such a position gives me more credibility with other stewards and members. I hope to relate our experiences in direct democracy and militant action to a wider audience, with the hope that other shops may emulate what we do.

Also, the LWG "needle trades fraction" would like to develop informal rap groups with the hope of developing an autonomous rank-and-file group within the various locals. Thus the work I do as an individual militant and as a steward is connected to this goal as well.

### **Mass organization vs. Ideological organization**

It is the LWG's hope that we can help to develop or initiate an organization that would be open to all militant workers who seek to develop policies and tactics that suit their needs and aspirations. It is from this perspective that we've initiated the Needle Trades Workers Action Committee. The role of NTWAC should be defined as an informal body that—in the opening stages—seeks to discuss the various problems within our shops and locals. From there we would like to see NTWAC help to co-ordinate and develop actions and a program that will meet the needs of the rank and file. It is also important that NTWAC remain independent of the leadership of the union. For the present we see NTWAC as part of a movement to revitalize the militant traditions and build towards a position of strength to fight the bosses and union and to act as a pressure group within the various locals. We don't view NTWAC as an electoral caucus or even as a caucus at all. We hope to be an action committee, one that raises the most militant propo-

## **Bomb Threats In N.Y. Lengthen Lunch Breaks**

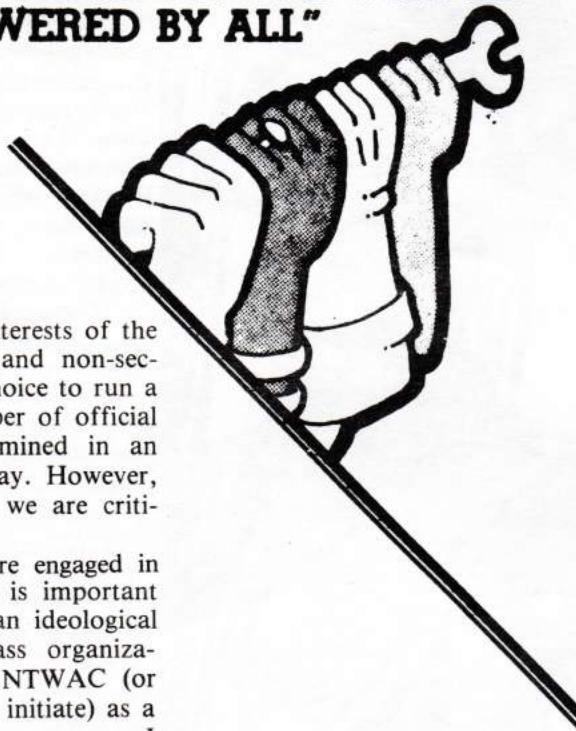
Thousands of office employees were forced to leave their buildings yesterday as police, plagued by more than 200 bomb threats since a weekend explosion at Kennedy International Airport, stepped up their search for explosive devices in the New York metropolitan area.

A New York Police Department spokesman said that although no bombs were found yesterday,

the threats, many of them apparently made to lengthen lunch breaks, continued to pour into police headquarters.

"The number of calls yesterday and the number today goes up around noon, and if people leave early, we seem to get calls from neighboring buildings," the spokesman.

## "AN ATTACK ON ONE WILL BE ANSWERED BY ALL"



sals and fights in the interests of the ranks. Being an open and non-sectarian committee, the choice to run a slate for any of a number of official positions will be determined in an open and democratic way. However, as anarcho-syndicalists, we are critical of such a position.

If other libertarians are engaged in this type of activity, it is important to distinguish between an ideological organization and a mass organization. The LWG views NTWAC (or any other committee we initiate) as a mass democratic body, one, as I noted before, that is open to all. Within NTWAC there will be various viewpoints on the union and politics and the nature of the struggle. Different people have distinct concepts of what NTWAC should be. Therefore, various tendencies will develop. This fact of diversity of point of view, and the discussions that will ensue, is *healthy* and should be encouraged. Naturally, we intend to discuss our ideas and put forth our own militant platform within the context of these discussions. Thus, we aren't vanguardist because we refuse to impose a pre-determined line that NTWAC must follow. Instead, our politics will be accepted or rejected on their own merits.

The "ideological organization," in this case, would be our own "fraction" within the mass organization. This fraction would attempt to help develop the mass organization in its form and perspectives along anarcho-syndicalist lines. We will have our own positions and will argue for them. In this way we will also hope to recruit people into our tendency and, hopefully, into the LWG. The LWG is an ideological organization because it is a group with a specific ideology—one that is composed

solely of those who agree with anarcho-syndicalism and are prepared to work towards those goals.

While our shop activities may enable us to increase the influence of the LWG and recruit new members, yet that isn't the most important goal. What is important is to spread the *ideal*, to begin to develop the basis for a rank and file movement within and independent of 65, and to begin to recreate the anarcho-syndicalist spirit of the workers' movement. Our goal as revolutionaries shouldn't be to group-build the way the vanguardists would party-build. Rather, we should attempt to build a movement of class conscious workers in which the LWG and other anarchist groups would be simply a catalyst in the development of revolutionary class struggle politics.

### Some suggestions

I would like to end this article with some suggestions for libertarians engaged in workplace activities:

- 1) The development of a shopfloor or industry wide press is essential. If this is not yet possible, we can initiate industry-defined columns in

**STRIKE!**, though such columns would not have the same impact as distinct newsletters. Whatever sort of literature we develop, it should be jargon-free, easily readable and graphically appealing.

2) Another possibility are mini-pamphlets pertaining to a particular industry or union or particular problem, strike, etc. Also mini-pamphlets that deal with a particular tactical or organizational question. (I might mention that I am working with a telephone lineman on reprinting the **Open Road** article on the B.C. Telephone occupation.)

3) Also, mini-pamphlets pertaining to topical political and social questions; or a discussion of what your particular industry, craft or profession might look like under workers' self-management. Also, we need introductory materials that might explain anarcho-syndicalism for beginners.

4) The development of informal "rap groups" within the shop, local or across union/industry lines. This will help to develop support networks and help in exchanging important information and can lead to the development of more permanent rank and file groups or movements.

5) The development of anarcho-syndicalist "fractions" or "affinity groups" in a particular shop, or union local. These fractions are needed for mutual aid and support and help in developing coherent policies and tactics for concerted activities in a particular place.

Needless to say, this article is not intended to be *the* definitive piece on anarchist shop work. I've merely made an attempt at sharing my own experiences with other comrades. If I haven't gone deep enough into a particular topic, that should only encourage others to discuss the issue more fully. If I've been able to provoke others into thinking, comparing notes and writing down their own experiences, then I've accomplished a lot. □



## Revolution Self-Limited . . .

power—power to make social changes. As workers became aware of their newfound power, new horizons of possible changes emerged. The masses of the people began to feel that it was possible to impose their own solutions—and at the same time, it was becoming clearer with each passing day that the oligarchy had no solutions to offer.

One example of working people beginning to work out their own solutions was the "direct action" strike. Andrzej Tymowski describes this concept as follows:

"The five-day work week was one of Solidarity's earliest and hardest-fought victories. Yet by late summer 1981 free Saturdays seemed a luxury Polish society could ill afford. The nation's economy teetered on the edge of collapse. Massive hunger marches inflamed social frustrations to the flashpoint of violence. Although the government offered no proposals of its own, it launched an hysterical campaign to

blame the volatile climate on the strikes spurred by Solidarity. To break this social and economic deadlock, Solidarity called for tactics which would provide social services to relieve the discomfort caused by the shortages, develop new kinds of strike action that would not disrupt necessary production, and set in motion workers' self-management of their workplaces and control over the goods produced. . . . Solidarity proposed a variation on the traditional strike, calling it the "direct action" strike. Workers would continue to work, but would find ways to deny the results of production to the state-employer. For example, printers struck to protest censorship and the government's refusal to grant Solidarity access to the media. During the strike, however, they continued to print children's books, local papers and strike bulletins—everything in fact, except the official party paper. . . . Solidarity began organizing production itself. The

national Commission issued an appeal to the Solidarity membership for volunteer work on their hard-won free Saturdays. Local self-management councils would take charge of plants during Saturday work, organizing the process of production and ensuring that goods produced were delivered to areas of greatest need." ("Who Are The Workers In Solidarity—And What Do They Want?", *Bay Area Solidarity Support Campaign Bulletin*, No. 1, p. 3) Workers who produced scarce goods would deny the product of their labor to the State—which may have intended the goods for export, to get cash to pay off the Western bankers—and instead, the mass organizations would arrange their own distribution.

Another example of workers moving towards creating their own solutions was the movement for workers' control. On June 23rd there was a conference of an independent organization called "The Network," attended by delegates from over 1000 workplace Solidarity chapters, including the Lenin shipyard and the Ursus tractor factory, to develop alternative ideas for the running of the economy, including the development of ideas about workers' self-management. This initiative was at first opposed by the national leadership of Solidarity, since they felt that the self-management idea was too provocative. The Network's idea of a new national economic co-ordinating and planning body, a Social and Economic Council, was later adopted by the Solidarity congress in October.

And finally, the workers' efforts to solve the social crisis in their own way included the drive to kick the Party organizations out of the workplaces and the general challenge to the power of the Party leadership to appoint their hacks to positions in enterprise management and local government.

### Bureaucratic Practices

(2) Rank-and-file democracy was also injured by the Self-Limiting Revolution strategy. The emphasis placed on negotiations at the top tended to concentrate the activity and decisions in the hands of the formal leadership. If the bosses have no confidence in the Leaders' ability to gain acquiescence of the ranks to unpalatable concessions, they will have little incentive to negotiate. Thus in a situation where certain people are in the position of representing others, in a situation which they feel is an unfavorable balance of forces—i.e., the threat of a Russian invasion—the leadership will be inclined to promise the people they

are negotiating with—the state-centralist oligarchy—a guarantee of “discipline” in exchange for concessions.

Leaders like Walesa and Kuron, who were committed to the idea that the movement had to limit its attacks on the regime, ended up taking a paternalistic, manipulative posture towards the mass movement. Time after time Walesa acted to unilaterally call off the workers’ mass actions. In March of 1981, after an impressive show of solidarity, involving four million Polish workers in a united “warning strike”—to protest the police assault at Bydgoszcz and in support of Rural Solidarity, Walesa unilaterally called off a proposed general strike.

Again, in November, Walesa was being flown around, at government expense, to end so-called “wildcat” strikes. As the *New York Times* reported: “Mr. Walesa expressed confidence...that he could end all strikes still under way in Poland. He said he was sure that Solidarity’s provincial leaders who did not agree to the need for labor peace would be eliminated from the union’s governing bodies. [According to a union spokesperson], ‘there are strong indications from almost all regions that there is a need to put some limits on strikes because we are fast approaching a situation that neither the union nor the government can control.’”

While it may be true that Walesa and his associates on the national commission never fully consolidated any sort of formal bureaucratic domination over Solidarnosc, their incipient bureaucratic practices did sow mistrust and division and helped to create a gulf between these would-be Leaders and the rank-and-file.

### No preparation for Showdown

(3) The fact that the movement was dominated by the Self-Limiting Revolution strategy had a third result: i.e. the movement went into the unavoidable confrontation with the State in an unprepared, ill-thought-out way. In a letter, recently smuggled out of prison, Adam Michnik, one of the founders of KOR, describes this problem:

“Solidarity did not expect a military coup and was taken by surprise. . . . The theoretical reflection...on the theme of altering the system limped along behind the events. Beyond hasty formulas there was almost no political reflection. . . . The fundamental—though never clearly presented—conflict within Solidarity was on the tempo of changes and their extent. . . . Some said ‘No more strikes, they get us noth-

ing’; others said ‘No more half-way strikes, we need a general strike that will force the government to make real concessions.’ It is hard to say who was in the majority but the latter were certainly more vocal. These were the ones—mostly young workers from the large enterprises—who demanded radical action from the leadership of Solidarity, and the prevention of this became more and more difficult (though both Walesa and Kuron attempted it). The power apparatus was despised more and more and not taken seriously enough. Almost no one believed it could succeed in using Polish soldiers to attack Polish workers . . . The attempt to terrorize Polish society with the help of the Polish army was hardly imaginable.”

The widespread nationalism made it harder to see the need to prepare for the dissolution of the armed bodies—cops, army, etc.—which the ruling oligarchy still had at their disposal.

These armed bodies are the real guts of the state machine. The armed force of the State is the last line of defense of any ruling class. The armed power of the State is organized in a top-down way, separate from the direct control of the masses of producers at the base of society. The State machine must be separate from the masses of people, ruling over society, because its basic social function is maintaining a hierarchical social order, based on the domination and exploitation of the producing class.

The working people of Poland could have realized their aspirations, and created a definitive solution to the Polish social and economic crisis, only through the destruction of the state power of the Polish oligarchy—creating a social set-up based on the power of their own mass democracy. Depriving the Polish rulers of their armed force was a necessary step in order to consolidate workers’ power over social and industrial affairs. This would mean organizing a militia of their own, directly managed by their own mass labor organizations—as the workers of the Csepel factories did during the Hungarian revolution in 1956—and dispersing or dividing the armed might of the Polish bureaucracy.

But in the process of destroying the old state, the movement would not need to create a new State—a State based on the creation of new police and army formations, loyal to some new political Leadership, ruling over the society. The consolidation of a new State would only signify the defeat of the workers’ drive for control, since it would mark the rise

of a new form of class rule. The form of exploitation and domination would change, perhaps, but hierarchy and exploitation would still be the basis of society. The workers have to retain the dominant power of armed violence in society in their own hands if there is to be a society based on genuine workers’ self-management. “Whoever controls the guns controls the factories” is simplifying a bit, but true nonetheless.

### A third route for social development

Marxism-Leninism and bourgeois liberalism both assume that there are only two possible ways in which social production can be co-ordinated in a modern industrial society—viz. centralized State direction or the capitalist marketplace. They both fail to see that face-to-face workers’ democracy and human solidarity, forged in the course of the class fight between workers and bosses, can be the basis for another type of social order.

The emergence of workers’ movements like Solidarity, in so far as they are based on direct democracy and mass participation, pose a third possible trajectory for society: Direct, democratic management of the whole of industry, of the whole society, by the united mass organizations of working people. Imagine, if you will, that the basic decisions and plans about what is to be produced, the techniques and resources to be used, distribution, etc. are made by some arrangement of congresses of all the mass workers’ organizations, where the delegates of the local organizations present the programs and ideas decided on at local assemblies. In short, imagine that the sovereign social power in Poland lies in a body something like the Solidarity congress—and with their collective social control defended by their own workers militia. A kind of self-government based on revolutionary unionism. That would be a basis for running society not based on the State but on working people co-ordinating their efforts to meet collectively set goals. With workers no longer divorced from control, and directly benefiting from production, it would be easy to enlist the support and enthusiasm of the Polish people in overcoming the deficiencies, the waste and mismanagement, of the old State-centralist oligarchy. Such a self-managed social order is what genuine socialism would be, and its seems clear that self-mobilized, self-directed mass workers’ movements like Soli-



darity are indispensable to the creation of this sort of society.

### Solidarity's "market socialism"

But the creation of the workers' own collective social power, their own society-wide means of economic co-ordination, was not consistent with the continued rule of the Polish oligarchy. Given the commitment to the Self-Limiting Revolution strategy, the alternative of society-wide collective coordination was not on the agenda. Yet the central control of the Polish bureaucracy was a major factor in the economic crisis. Thus I think the leading activists were, in some cases, led to the market self-management idea as a tactic—a way of reducing the power of the central State oligarchy without forming an alternative society-wide power to completely replace them. Not because of some ideological commitment to the "restoration of capitalism"—as some U.S. leftists have asserted. "We will not return back to capitalism," said tractor worker Andrzej Czupryna during a UAW-sponsored tour last August, "because the means of production, the places of work, are the nation's wealth. As such they ought to be controlled by the nation, not by private enterprise."

Moreover, while it endorsed the use of the market, their proposal of a Social Economic Council to develop an overall plan for the economy indicate an expectation that enterprises would still operate within the framework of collective, society-wide decision-making. The trajectory of Solidarity was toward the radical democratizing of decision-making responsibility for society-wide planning.

"[W]here Solidarity, as the instrument of the working class, actually to take power and gain control of the economy as a whole, there is every reason to believe that its basic tendency would be to draw back from the market. For a government of the working class could see concretely how its commitment to workers' self-management, to the prevention of unemployment, to increasing equality, etc. are contradicted by the market." (*Against the Current*, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 11)

### International Revolutionary Unionism

Now, I realize that people who are sympathetic to the so-called "moderates" in Solidarnosc—architects of the



Maciej Szepanski, one of Gierek's closest pals, was Director of Polish Television, a people's television, in the service of the people. Comrade Szepanski owned a farm, a palace, a 23-room house, a villa with sauna, a glass-bottomed swimming pool, a residence in Nairobi, a few blocks of flats in town, a yacht, three aeroplanes, seven cars, a Siamese 'massage' parlour, a personal porn cinema with 900 blue video cassettes... and an untarnished class consciousness. Maciej Szepanski has just been fired. Why? Because the films, you see, had been shot in the capitalist West. Mustn't overstep the mark...

—1981

Self-Limiting Revolution strategy, may say that the alternative that I've described is crazy. It'd be suicidal, they might say, because it would certainly provoke a Russian invasion.

But I think it wasn't absolutely certain that a revolutionary strategy, a strategy of going for the whole ball of wax, would have been unsuccessful. One outcome that couldn't be ruled out is the possibility that the revolutionary workers' movement in Poland would also incite similar mass movements in the other countries in Eastern Europe, which suffer from similar social and economic discontents.

Indeed, I think that the possibility of bringing the working classes of the other Eastern bloc countries—and especially in the Russian heartland of the Soviet Empire—into the equation was the only chance Solidarity had for success. It was ultimately the only solution to the threat of Russian invasion.

Solidarity gave some recognition to this possibility by calling for the formation of independent self-managed unions in the other Eastern bloc countries. There wasn't really any possibility of a successful resolution of the Polish crisis so long as the conflict was confined within the boundaries of the Polish nation.

It is true that a strategy of international revolutionary unionism—that aims at the overthrow of the statist ruling classes of Eastern Europe, and the institution of collective workers' management of social and industrial affairs on an international scale, was admittedly just a possibility and carried no absolute guarantee of success. None-

theless we can say that the strategy of the Self-Limiting Revolution didn't offer even that much possibility of success.

### Resurgence Inevitable

While December 13 may have been a setback for the Polish movement, this is not the first time this working class has suffered repression at the hands of the Polish state. Indeed, Solidarity was the outgrowth of previous worker rebellions, the Poznan demonstrations of 1956, the general strikes of 1970 and 1976, which also met with repression.

Now the Polish movement is confronted with the task of assimilating the lessons of the Solidarnosc experience: the power of class-wide solidarity at "the point of production," the unworkability of the Self-Limiting Revolution idea, the need to confront the issue of "who controls the guns," the necessity for internationalizing the struggle.

The future resurgence of the Polish workers' movement seems certain. Certainly the military junta does not confront a pacified and subdued populace. A clear indication of this fact was the 50,000-strong May Day counter-demonstration in Warsaw—organized by over 60 local workplace committees, acting independently of the official Solidarity Co-ordinating Commission. And more recently, Warsaw has also witnessed a 15-minute general protest strike—with 70–80% of the workforce participating, according to Warsaw Solidarity. This is only the beginning of new struggles that the state-centralist regime will be faced with in the coming months. □

# Polish Women . . .

mass strikes and demonstrations along the Baltic Coast had failed to win this victory.

An underground workers' movement arose in Poland during the late 1970s. Embryonic free union committees formed a central part of this development with the newspaper *Robotnik (The Worker)* as its public organ. Three of the major contributors to this publication were women.

The strike at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk during August of 1980 began in response to the dismissal of a woman,

free union activist Anna Walentynowicz. She subsequently became one of the best known Solidarnosc militants in Poland.

Anna Walentynowicz's militance was exemplified in the storm within Solidarnosc following the March, 1981 Bydgoszcz incident that almost resulted in an open-ended general strike. At the time, she vehemently criticized Walesa at a Solidarnosc national presidium meeting for his moderate, conciliatory response to the regime over the dispute. Today she resides in a detention center set up exclusively for women detainees.

At the grass-roots level of the workers' movement women picked up on the attacks on privileges for the bureaucracy and police so evident in the Gdansk Agreements. During the 16 months of struggle ended by martial law, some women made demands like calling for the conversion of villas belonging to corrupt officials into childcare centers. Women also reportedly facilitated the use of horizontal strikes whereby workers in strikebound plants went directly to other shutdown workplaces to unite their respective demands without the use of sanctioned intermediaries.

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## Aims of the Polish Feminists

### Women's Demands

1. The possibility of a break in studies for women students who are more than three months pregnant.
2. Greater consideration of famous women in school textbooks.
3. The launching of a wide-ranging investigation into the situation of women.
4. Development of women's self-consciousness and consolidation of their authority. Struggle against the demands made upon women to conform.
5. The informing of society about woman's situation and role.
6. The expansion of services.
7. A campaign about the creative organization of free time, which leads to many-sided development of the personality in the intellectual, artistic and physical spheres.
8. Raising of the social prestige of unmarried, separated or otherwise unattached women, and an improvement in their economic situation.
9. Equal status in law for marital and non-marital associations.
10. Raising of men's sense of responsibility for their children and for abortions; at present women are alone to suffer the psychological and moral problems connected with abortion.
11. A curb on the arrogant and paternalistic way in which women's teams are treated.
12. Measures against the inhibition of women's efforts at school and in the family; against hackneyed images and harmful myths, such as the idea that women are happy in a subordinate position, or that immaturity and intellectual inferiority are pre-ordained for them.

### Our Goals

We want as many women as possible to get involved in struggle against the persisting exploitation and injustice.

- Unpaid leave should be available for both parents and capable of being taken by either parent at any given time. Such leave should be spread over three years; maternity/paternity leave should be granted to both parents.
- A monthly allowance and social services for housewives.
- Equal pay for men and women with the same training and length of service; today wages are lower in so-called women's occupations which involve the same degree of mental and physical fatigue.
- Application of the Equal Opportunities Act to the female sex: a) in access to institutes of higher education where women are now in a minority; and b) in appointment and promotion to managerial positions, where at present women are disadvantaged even if they have the same or higher qualifications than men.
- We want both sexes to have the same social and economic status in any kind of occupation or office. We want to disseminate our ideas through:
  - 1) A feminist publication.
  - 2) A feminist theatre.
  - 3) A feminist art gallery.
  - 4) Meetings, seminars and conversations with well-known women who propagate women's ideas and art, deal with the psychology and specific characteristics of women, and represent the most interesting aspects of women.
  - 5) A centralized pool of information covering feminist movements; great women figures both past and present; and the situation of women in Poland and the world.
  - 6) Contact with feminist movements in other countries; there is already contact with those in West Germany, France and the USSR.
  - 7) We want to protect women's interests: we are for the development of their consciousness, and for the fulfillment of their cultural, scientific, social and existential needs through publicization of the existence of such needs.

### Women in the Lead

Food price increases and shortages have done a lot to mobilize women in conjunction with the workers' movement. Widespread resistance was sparked by last July's announcement of food price increases of as much as 400%. Again,

"Women in Lodz sat in with massive wildcats and dared to hold street demonstrations. Over 10,000 women, including children and grandmothers, with a cordon of men around the outside for protection, demonstrated for a week. Their banners proclaimed 'Hungry of the World, Unite!'"<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, Polish women were taking a leading role in the class struggle during the months immediately preceding the imposition of the "state of war."

The same fighting determination of Polish working women became evident following December 13. Halina Bortnowska is one example. She was instrumental in the powerful steelworkers' strike in Krakow. Other women are reported to have blocked tanks and thrown back tear gas grenades outside a occupied mine in Silesia. "In Gdansk, 3000 women armed with flowers and Solidarnosc bulletins faced tanks ready to crush the Lenin Shipyards."<sup>10</sup>

Last but not least, Solidarnosc militant Ewa Kubasiewicz has the notoriety of receiving the longest prison sentence imposed on anyone to date for violating martial law. Ewa got ten years in early February for organizing a strike at a merchant marine college at Gdynia along the Baltic Coast.

The actions of these women exemplify the proven ability of Polish working women to not only make a profound impact upon the general struggle of the workers but to break out of the traditional roles imposed by patriarchal oppression. The respect that their examples inspire should help to counteract the dead weight of Catholicism in the workers' movement.

Yet, the struggle since December 13 indicates a continuation of the tendency to subordinate the interests of women to those of the workers' movement and civil society in general. Solidarnosc's demands for lifting of martial law, release of all detainees and negotiations on the basis of the Gdansk agreements re-

9. Wislanka, Urszula, "The Revolutionary Activity of Polish Women," *News and Letters* Vol. 27 No. 2, p. 2.

10. *Ibid.* p. 2.



Rosa Luxemburg

gate all other demands to the status of marginal considerations. Significantly, the Church has put forward these same demands, albeit pursuing them in very different ways, revealing the continuing close relationship it has with the unions.

By failing to take up the struggles of women as a major part of the overall struggle, the worker's movement fails to attack the foundations of the class rule of the bureaucracy in their totality. In other words, this omission is another manifestation of reformism and patriarchy in the movement—in addition to being a basis for continued Catholic strength within it.

What therefore becomes necessary is some form of synthesis involving the achievements of women within the workers' movement and the desperately needed growth of a powerful, autonomous women's movement fully conscious of what it takes to achieve liberation. The tradition of resistance by working women as workers must therefore combine autonomous, self-activity by themselves as women.

The potential for this fusion permeates contemporary Polish society. It exists within all of the responses the problems encountered by Polish women in the impoverished reality of their everyday lives. Some of these responses have been collective, such as the Lodz hunger marches. Others are very personal, individual responses—like getting divorces, using birth control devices and having abortions in defiance of both the Church and the State.

The deep potential for struggles intimately linking resistance to patriarchy with those against class oppression stands as proof of the inseparable relationship between the liberation of workers and the emancipation of women. A liberatory process in Poland, linking them will, if carried to its logical conclusion, inevitably culminate in social revolution.

In the meantime, the military junta's state of war stands as the immediate obstacle. Smashing it is a necessary precondition for substantial progress on both fronts. Even so, the interests of women must not fall by the wayside. Women without question can and should contribute greatly to the objective of smashing martial law while not compromising either their organizational autonomy or demands. Indeed, they can show how an autonomous course of action will aid the struggle by expanding its dimensions.

The expansion of the struggle is in fact the key to success because this will mean its radicalization. Similarly, expansion also means extending the struggle beyond Poland's borders. This will undermine Polish nationalism, thereby weakening the influence of the Catholic Church which thrives upon it. The simultaneous weakening of both will in turn greatly help to open the way for a self-managed society in which the inseparable liberation of women and all workers will be complete. □



(continued from inside front cover)

and defining its own goals, and so on. This will be necessary in order to fight for their own freedom and to gain support from the broader mass movement. We see such a women's movement as an essential and independent element in a many-faceted, self-managing mass movement for working class self-emancipation. Thus, our reference to "organizations of groups of people not defined by position in industry but whose interests are consistent with working class emancipation" was meant above all to apply to a women's movement.

While it is certainly true that experience is the ultimate test of all ideas about how the world works, a theory—like Janine's ideas about Patriarchy—once it has been worked out, can also be applied to situations that you've not directly experienced.

Of course, it is true that Janine believes her theory about patriarchal oppression because it explains the things she *has* experienced. But once she has the theory, it also enables her to understand and make predictions even about situations she hasn't experienced: "You say nothing about how the assemblies and congresses you propose will confront and fight sexism—and as a woman, I *know* it will be an issue." How does she know this? From direct experience in El Salvador? Because Salvadoran women she has personally talked to have told her they regard it as a crucial issue?

We think Janine's right in saying it is a crucial issue—but we also think this calls into question the empiricist principle that she appeals to.

She knows that sexism will be a problem because she has certain ideas—a theory—about the patriarchal character of the existing social order. Why can't we say: "As workers, we *know* that any State, even the FMLN state-in-the-making, will simply be an instrument to maintain some form of class oppression"?

Certainly it is true that the ideas we expressed in our leaflet—about self-managed labor organization and workers' militias as the alternative to guerrilla armies run by vanguardist political groups—did not arise in a vacuum. We discuss some of the Latin American background for such ideas in our introduction to the leaflet in this issue. □



March 27 demonstration in Oakland, CA against U.S. intervention in El Salvador.



Cops spray pepper gas at workers on strike against Rhode Island's largest industrial employer, machine-tool-builder Brown & Sharpe, March 22.

**"As long as a possessing and a non-possessing group of human beings face one another in enmity within society, the state—the organ of political power for the forcible subjugation and oppression of the non-possessing class—will be indispensable to the possessing minority for the protection of its privileges."**

**—Rudolf Rocker**